TRANSNATIONAL SPACE AND HOMOSEXUALITY

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An Analysis of Same-sex Intimate Cross-border Relationships among Men in Haiti and their Migrant Partners across the Haitian Diaspora.

By

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TITLE: Transnational Space and Homosexuality: An Analysis of Same-sex Intimate Cross-border Relationships among Men in Haiti and their Migrant Partners across the Haitian Diaspora.

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Lay Abstract

In 2022, the World Bank estimated that international migrants sent 647 billion US dollars to their families, kinships, and friendship networks worldwide. This significant flow of money exemplifies the cross-border ties, connections, and relationships that people who moved from their homelands to resettle in host countries maintain with those who have stayed behind in their home communities. While scholars have conducted significant research in the past four decades on how international migrants' gender, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, country of origin and host countries' reception contexts shape how they maintain such ties, connections, and relationships with their homelands, there is a dearth of research on how the sexuality of LGBTQ+ migrants and nonmigrants shapes how they develop and maintain connections, ties, and relationships that span national borders. To fill this gap, this thesis uses a Haitian case study to examine how migrant and nonmigrant men develop and sustain same-sex intimate relationships across national borders and what they mean to them in their home country's socioeconomic and political contexts.

Abstract

Since the 1950s, Haitian transnational migrants have ensured the socioeconomic survival of many nonmigrants in Haiti by sending billions of US dollars annually to their families and friends back home. While Haitian migrants are often perceived as having a positive economic impact on Haiti, some are criticized for engaging in homosexual behaviours, seemingly infringing on 'traditional' Haitian family values in a largely conservative 'Christian' society. This revives old debates about migrants' role in using their money to normalize same-sex identity and practices and pervert sexual morality and 'acceptable' gender norms among nonmigrants in Haiti. Accordingly, men in Haiti are involved in same-sex intimate transnational relationships with migrants from the Haitian diaspora because of their precarious socioeconomic status in Haiti and not necessarily because they may be gay. Although homosexuality has always existed in Haiti and same-sex intimate relationships among men in Haiti and those abroad have long existed, these relationships have rarely been studied in the literature on transnational migration and sexualities. To fill this gap, this thesis draws on eleven months of ethnographic fieldwork and forty-four semi-structured interviews with men in Northern Haiti to show how homosexuality intersects with transnational space and socioeconomic inequality to shape and organize transnational processes and same-sex intimate relationships involving men in Haiti and their migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora in the United States, Canada, France, Brazil, Chile, and the Dominican Republic.

Keywords: Transnational Space, Diaspora, Sexuality, Inequality, Economic-Social-Political Remittances, Intimacy, Migration, Mobility, Haiti

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Impact of COVID-19 Restrictions on the Research Plan

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted my original research project. I had planned to conduct multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in Montréal, Miami, and Cayenne in the Summer of 2020. However, I had to change my plans as the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic in March 2020. Instead, I focused my ethnographic field on one site in Northern Haiti, forming this thesis's basis.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Appendix

Preface

I completed all writing and analysis for this dissertation. I researched and sole-authored each chapter (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6). I conducted the literature review for this thesis in early 2020 and collected data through ethnography and semi-structured interviews in Northern Haiti in 2020 and 2021. I transcribed the forty-four interviews, coded and analyzed my ethnographic field notes and interview data in 2022, and completed the dissertation write-up from 2022 to 2023.

INTRODUCTION

As a migration scholar and an international migrant, I am always moved by the power of social science research to uncover the reality of human migration and mobility. Sometimes, it is hard to read about the experience of discrimination, shaped by racism, sexism, classism, ageism, ableism, and homophobia, among others, that international migrants go through to achieve their fundamental human rights to move across borders and pursue better opportunities for themselves, their families, kinships, and friendship networks. Other times, I am astounded by some international migrants' exceptional achievements despite the multidimensional barriers they sometimes face in their lives to integrate into host countries where they did not grow up, speak the native language, or understand socioeconomic, cultural, and political systems in place.

However, throughout my ten years studying migration as an undergraduate and graduate student in France and Canada, and my fourteen years of migration experience from Haiti to Venezuela, France, and Canada, and my visits and mobility projects across the Americas, Europe, Africa, and Asia, there is one thing that has always remained an enigma to me: how migrants and nonmigrants negotiate systems of stigmatization, discrimination, and exclusion as they live their lives every day. I always wonder how they navigate such systems while remaining true to themselves, their human desires, personal and professional projects, and while taking care of their mental health.

This enigma has kept my intellectual curiosity and scholarly interests alive as I conduct research in the fields of international migration and the sociology of sexualities. It has also fundamentally motivated me to pursue my doctoral research to explore, examine, and understand how men in Northern Haiti navigate their same-sex intimate transnational relationships with migrant partners while negotiating systems of exclusion, stigmatization, and discrimination shaped by homophobia and socioeconomic disparities between poor and prosperous nations. In this thesis, I ask the following question: How do homosexual identity and practices intersect with transnational space and

socioeconomic inequality to shape how men in Northern Haiti develop and sustain same-sex intimate transnational relationships with migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora? To answer this question, I will take you on my research journey by analyzing my eleven months of ethnographic fieldwork and the forty-four interviews I conducted with men in Northern Haiti in 2020 and 2021.

Same-Sex Intimate Transnational Relationships

Josué[1] is thirty-one years old. He identifies as gay. He is a cultural events organizer in Cap Haitian – Haiti's second-largest city in the country's northern region. He shares an apartment with two gay friends in a middle-class neighbourhood on the city's periphery. Originally from Port-au-Prince, he moved to Cap Haitian after the death of his parents during the devastating 2010 earthquake, which killed an estimated 230,000 people in Haiti and mobilized considerable support and donations from the Haitian diaspora, international aid community, and private citizens worldwide. Over the past twelve years, Josué has maintained various same-sex intimate cross-border relationships with Haitian migrants who live in Miami, New York, Montréal, and Paris. Some lasted as short as two months. Others lasted several years. His ongoing relationship with a Haitian gay migrant who lives in New York, his longest so far, has lasted five years.

I interviewed Josué two days after he returned to Cap Haitian from Santo Domingo, where his migrant partner had arranged for the couple to take a week-long vacation. During the interview, Josué stated: "Let me tell you something, I am so proud of being gay. Comparing myself with the straight guys I grew up with, I realize they have not progressed as much in their lives… Some wish they were gay to enjoy the life I am enjoying with my *dyaspora*[2] partner." Josué's sentiment is echoed by many men in Northern Haiti who identify as gay, bisexual, pansexual, transgender, straight or men

[1] I use Josué as a pseudonym to protect this research participant's identity.
[2] Dyaspora in Creole is a term that Haitians use to refer to compatriots who migrated from Haiti to various destinations across the world but occasionally return to the country to visit their family and friends, develop projects, build businesses, and/or to attend festivities, such as the Carnival and religious celebrations.

who have sex with men (MSM) and have been involved in same-sex[3] intimate cross-border relationships with migrant partners residing in Haitian diasporic communities in the United States, Canada, France, Brazil, Chile, and the Dominican Republic. They view their intimate transnational relationships with Haitian migrant partners as a distinctive feature of their Northern Haiti life.

Through these relationships, many men in Northern Haiti have been able to change their lives significantly. Some have rented better apartments, built new houses, and started small businesses. Others have successfully funded their higher education in expensive private institutions while caring for their family members and friends by paying for medical bills, groceries, tuition fees, electricity, and other essential commodities. In addition to the economic remittances that they received from their migrant partners, some nonmigrants have learned from them new gender and sexual norms and political strategies to fight for gay rights in Northern Haiti. By the end of my fieldwork, ten had left Haiti to join their partners in the United States, Canada, and France. Fifteen had travelled to the Dominican Republic to vacation with their migrant partners coming from the United States, Canada, and France.

While these same-sex cross-border relationships shape Haitian men's sexual identity and practices, socioeconomic status, and life projects among their family, kinship, and friendship networks in Northern Haiti, they also shape the lives of Haitian migrants, who send remittances to support their partners in Northern Haiti's socioeconomic and political context and/or help them emigrate to various countries across the Haitian diaspora. As expressed by men in Northern Haiti, these relationships are 'essentially' based on their homosexual identity and practices, which are a taboo and an object of discrimination and stigmatization across the Haitian transnational social space, i.e., Haiti and the Haitian diaspora. As such, homosexuality – understood here as a social identity grounded in

[3] Please see pages 4 to 6 for my discussion of the terminology regarding my research participants' gender and sexual orientation in this thesis.

same-sex practices – enables men to develop cross-border connections and sustain same-sex intimate relationships across the Haitian transnational social space.

Although these cross-border relationships seem central to the lives and projects of men who have sex with men in Northern Haiti and the Haitian diaspora, they are rarely the object of academic research in the burgeoning field intersecting migration and sexuality. To fill this gap, this dissertation is the first to examine the characteristics and meanings of same-sex intimate transnational relationships among co-ethnic/co-national migrants and nonmigrants by drawing on eleven months of ethnographic fieldwork and forty-four semi-structured interviews with men who have sex with men in Northern Haiti.

RESEARCH TERMINOLOGY

For the sake of clarity, I use the terms 'homosexual' and 'gay' interchangeably in some parts of this thesis to refer to the same-sex practices that ground the intimate transnational relationships my research participants in Northern Haiti develop and sustain with Haitian migrant partners in the United States, Canada, France, Brazil, Chile, and the Dominican Republic. These same-sex practices are the basis on which they established intimate transnational relationships with migrant partners from the Haitian diaspora regardless of whether they understood and defined their social identity as gay, homosexual, straight, bisexual, pansexual, or transgender. This means they could self-identify as straight but still have same-sex relationships with other men. While their social identity may seem incongruent with their same-sex practices, they did not perceive them as incompatible.

In Haiti – a bilingual Francophone and Creolophone country – *'homosexuel'* in French means *masisi* in the Haitian Creole language and vice versa. Both terms are used to refer to all categories of men who have sex with men. The term homosexual is the direct English translation of the French term *homosexuel*, and the term gay is the closest translation of the term *masisi* in Haitian Creole. While the term *homosexuel* is mainly used in the French language in Haiti to describe the sexual identity and

practices of men who have sex with men, the term *masisi* is pejoratively used in Haiti not only to describe homosexuality as a social identity grounded in same-sex practices but also to stigmatize, discriminate against, and/or ostracize Haitian men who have sex with men.

Methodologically, my analytical focus in this thesis is on how homosexual identity and same-sex practices shape intimate transnational relationships among Haitian men in Northern Haiti and those in the Haitian diaspora. Therefore, I use the terms homosexual and gay as they are understood in Northern Haiti's context to focus on same-sex practices while including and embracing the various labels nonmigrants used to describe their gender and sexuality during my fieldwork. Doing so has two methodological implications.

First, the terms homosexual and gay allow me to account for the fluidity of how my research participants defined themselves during my fieldwork. For instance, one participant defined themselves simultaneously as gay, bisexual, and straight in the same interview. Their understanding and use of labels or categories to define their gender and sexuality depended on what message they wanted to convey at a specific moment. This then poses important methodological questions to me as a researcher, which I articulate as follows:

Which of the different labels a research participant uses during the same interview should I use in my analysis? If I use one rather than another, how do I choose? Do I choose a label because it matters to me as the researcher or the participant? Who am I to decide which label matters the most in a research participant's life if they use several seemingly contradictory labels to define themselves? Therefore, I opt for 'methodological fluidism' (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002:326), allowing my research participants to label their gender and sexuality as they see fit, which I later analyze in the socio-historical, economic, and political context shaping their lives in Northern Haiti.

Second, as a scholar translating my research from Northern Haiti's Franco-Creolophone context to North American and French academia, I acknowledge that the act of translating may

involuntarily produce a loss of meaning and nuances in the actual terms that Haitians use in Creole to discuss their gender and sexuality. To solve this methodological problem, I contextualize instances where participants discuss their sexual identity and practices while never losing sight of how they shape their intimate transnational relationships and vice versa, which is the key objective of my research. For a more extended discussion of homosexuality in Haiti, please refer to chapter two.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This dissertation's central questions are a) empirical: What does transnationalism mean to Haitian nonmigrants involved in same-sex intimate cross-border relationships with Haitian migrant partners in the social, economic, and political context of Northern Haiti? And b) theoretical: How does homosexuality intersect with transnational space and socioeconomic inequality between Haitian migrants and nonmigrants to shape their same-sex intimate cross-border connections and relationships? To respond to these questions, this thesis is structured around the three following themes, which include some secondary research questions:

I) Homosexual Transnational Space and Cross-border Connections

How does the interplay of homosexuality and transnational space shape how men in Northern Haiti perceive, connect, and develop same-sex intimate cross-border relationships with migrants across the Haitian diaspora in the often-heteronormative context of their families, kinships, and the local community in Northern Haiti?

II) Transnational Relationships, Remittances, and Meanings

How do homosexuality and transnational space shape how men in Northern Haiti negotiate economic, social, and political remittances as they navigate same-sex intimate cross-border relationships with migrant partners from the Haitian diaspora? What do these transnational relationships mean to them, their families, and the local community in Northern Haiti's sociocultural, economic, and political context?

III) Homosexual Transnational Spaces and Life Projects

How do homosexuality and transnational space enable or inhibit the sustainability of intimate cross-border relationships among nonmigrants in Northern Haiti and their migrant partners over time? How do Haitian nonmigrants form life projects with their migrant partners, and how do these projects shape their lives in the homeland?

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Diaspora and Transnational Ties

The diaspora literature examines how migrants use their homeland's national identity, 'culture,' and common fate to form diasporic communities and share a sense of belonging amid dispersal (Safran 1991; Ma Mung 1994; Vertovec 1997; Satzewich 2002; Brubaker 2004; Audebert 2012; Cohen 2022). Central to the literature on diaspora is an understanding that migrants remain strongly connected to their homelands, allowing them to develop ties with compatriots in their home country and other co-ethnic communities across different regions of the world. The literature on transnationalism (Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Portes et al. 1999; Faist 2000; Satzewich and Wong 2006; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007) examines how migrants build and maintain social, affective, economic, and political ties with nonmigrants in their homelands as they integrate socially, economically, and politically into their host societies.

While scholarship on diaspora emphasizes the multipolarity of emigrants' migration fields and the inter-polarity of the relationships that emigrants maintain between the different places where they have resettled and their homelands (Sperling 2014; Zéphirin 2019; Audebert and Joseph 2022), transnationalism primarily focuses on the relationships that immigrants in specific host societies maintain with family members, kinship networks, and local communities in their home countries (Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt 1999; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Building on this

understanding of diaspora and transnationalism, scholars from the 1990s onward have conducted numerous empirical studies to examine how different factors, such as immigrants' socioeconomic status in their host countries, nationalism, reception contexts, race and ethnicity, and gender, shape transnational ties between those who left and those who have stayed behind in the homeland.

One of the substantial contributions of diaspora and transnationalism as research fields is the demonstration that the cross-border ties migrants sustain with nonmigrants not only affect their lives and projects at the individual and community level but also affect the social, economic, and political lives of their host countries and homelands at the macro level. In this regard, scholars have shown that transnational ties drive chain migration (Massey 1990, 2018) at the macro level, affecting many receiving countries' demographic makeup (Castles 2004, 2010), shaping immigration policies and access to citizenship rights (Bloemraad et al. 2008), and providing, at the diasporic community level, an ethnic enclave economy for the integration of newcomers in the host society (Portes and Jensen 1989).

At the micro and meso level, extensive research has shown that transnational ties between migrants and nonmigrants, especially the economic remittances that migrants send to their homelands, have played a vital role in the survival of many families, kinship networks, and local communities across the globe (Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Guarnizo 2003; Orozco 2006; Cela et al. 2022). In addition to economic remittances, scholars have shown that migrants have supported families, local organizations, and communities in their home society by sending social and political remittances (Levitt 1998, 2001; Lacroix et al. 2016) – i.e., ideas, knowledge, information, skills, and strategies acquired in their host societies.

While scholars have shown how connections between migrants and nonmigrants shape the lives of individuals and affect the dynamics of families, communities, and countries across borders, such transnational connections, ties, and relationships are often examined in the literature as

heteronormative, primarily family-oriented, community-driven, and nationalistic. This means that heteronormativity, i.e., heterosexuality as the norm, is the 'taken-for-granted premise' of migrant/nonmigrants' transnational relationships in the literature (Manalansan 2006; Luibhéid 2008; Cantú, Naples, and Vidal-Ortiz 2009; Carrillo 2017). In other words, the reasons why migrants – usually heterosexual research participants – maintain transnational relationships with nonmigrants are often implied to support their heterosexual family members, kinship networks, and local communities in their countries of origin.

As such, existing research on diaspora and transnationalism not only makes the cross-border connections among LGTBQ+ migrants and nonmigrants invisible but also raises the question of whether its heteronormative understanding of transnationalism can apply to the intimate relationships LGBTQ+ migrants and nonmigrants develop and sustain transnationally.

Remaining Gaps

As Josué and other men who have sex with men in Northern Haiti mentioned, their homosexual identity and practices are fundamental to developing and maintaining transnational relationships with migrant partners in the Haitian diaspora. The remittances they receive from their migrant partners, because of these relationships, significantly structure their lives in Haiti. At the same time, the same-sex intimate transnational relationships that migrants sustain with nonmigrants shape their intimate lives in the Haitian diaspora. Yet, the experience of men such as Josué, whose homosexuality shapes and organizes their transnational relationships with their migrant partners in the diaspora, is hardly studied in the literature intersecting transnationalism and sexuality.

Existing research has focused on how gender, sexuality, and migrants' higher socioeconomic status affect the dynamics of transnational relationships among heterosexual couples and families who live across international borders (Goldring 1998; Pessar and Malher 2003; Perreñas 2005; Carling 2008; Baldassar et al. 2014). While these studies have contributed to our understanding of how gender and

sexuality shape cross-border relationships between migrants and nonmigrants, two critical gaps remain. First, existing research tends to focus on the perspective and experiences of migrants as they navigate transnational relationships with nonmigrants. As such, migrants remain the focal unit of analysis in these studies. In contrast, nonmigrants' experience, which is crucial to these transnational relationships, is seldom examined. Therefore, we know little about how gender and sexuality shape how nonmigrants negotiate and navigate transnational relationships with migrants in their home countries.

Second, when research focuses on the intersection of migration and homosexuality, it mainly examines how homosexuality drives migration to the Global North (Luibhéid 2004; Manalansan 2006; Cantú et al. 2009; Carrillo 2017), which is often described as a haven for LGBTQ+ people fleeing homophobic societies in the Global South (Lee and Brotman 2011; Tamagawa 2020). In doing so, research intersecting migration and homosexuality rarely examines how LGBTQ+ people in the Global South develop and maintain intimate transnational relationships with their compatriots in diasporic communities without focusing on migration projects as the primary unit of analysis.

As a result, we know little about how LGBTQ+ nonmigrants develop and maintain transnational relationships with migrants, what these liaisons mean to them and how they affect their lives and projects in the often-heteronormative context of their families and the local community in the homeland. This constitutes the critical objective of this dissertation, which aims to examine how homosexuality intersects with transnational space and socioeconomic inequality to shape and organize cross-border relationships involving gay men in Haiti and their migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora.

Bringing Homosexuality into Transnationalism

Research on immigration and sexuality has shown that sexuality is a dimension of power that shapes and organizes how LGBTQ+ people migrate and incorporate into their host societies

(Luibhéid 2004, 2008; Manalansan 2006; Cantú et al. 2009; Carrillo 2017; Tamagawa 2020; Murray 2015, 2020). By arguing that sexuality is a dimension of power, Eithne Luibhéid uses a queer theory approach to demonstrate how sexuality thoroughly 'shapes families, communities, state institutions, and economies as well as how sexual norms, struggles and forms of governance always articulate hierarchies of gender, race, class, and geopolitics' (Luibhéid 2008). In the same vein, Lionel Cantú (2009) posits that sexuality is a dimension of power that "has, in fact, shaped *all* migration in its practice, regulation, and study in profound yet 'invisible' ways" (ibid: 26). Taking a queer standpoint, Cantú reveals how "homosexuality as a marginal identity influences migration" and "how heterosexuality as a normative regime shapes the social relations and processes of migration" (ibid).

Furthermore, Héctor Carrillo (2017) shows how sexuality shapes the pre-migration, migration, and post-migration experiences of gay Mexican men in the United States. In doing so, he shows how "international migration processes are motivated fully or partially by the sexuality of those who migrate" (Carrillo 2017:25). In the same vein, examining the transnational experiences of Japanese LGBT diasporas, Masami Tamagawa (2020) demonstrates how favourable same-sex immigration policy in the United States, Canada, and Australia motivates Japanese LGBT people to migrate to these three countries and shapes their integration processes after migration. From this perspective, homosexuality not only motivates the migration of LGBTQ+ people but also shapes how they incorporate into their host societies.

Homosexual Transnational Space

Building on this understanding of sexuality, I develop in this thesis the concept of Homosexual Transnational Space to argue that homosexuality is a dimension of power (Foucault 1980, 1991) that shapes transnationalism among gay men in Haiti and the Haitian diaspora. Paramount to an understanding of sexuality as a dimension of power is that homosexuality enables cross-border

connections among men in Northern Haiti and the Haitian diaspora. These connections lead to developing and maintaining intimate transnational relationships over time. Furthermore, I argue that these relationships shape Haitian migrants' and nonmigrants' sexual identities and practices, which can be sites of tensions, contradictions, and conflicts in the socio-structural contexts of their lives in Haiti and the Haitian diaspora.

As migration scholars (Goldring 1998; Levitt 2001; Carling 2008; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2010) have shown, cross-border relationships between those who have left and those who have stayed behind are often sites of tensions, contradictions, conflicts, and power struggles due to the different socioeconomic statuses that migrants and nonmigrants occupy in their transnational social field. Migrants often acquire a higher socioeconomic status after migrating to wealthier countries, granting them more power over nonmigrants. This often leads to tensions, contradictions, and conflicts that shape how migrants and nonmigrants negotiate their identities and navigate their transnational relationships.

From this perspective, understanding how homosexuality shapes transnationalism calls for examining how LGBTQ+ migrants and nonmigrants negotiate such tensions, contradictions, conflicts, and power struggles in the socio-structural conditions where they develop and maintain intimate relationships transnationally. As Cantú (2009) and Carrillo (2017) have shown, examining the socio-structural conditions – i.e., the social, economic, and political contexts – in which sexuality shapes migration is vital to understanding the experience of gay migrants. Building on these insights, this thesis makes a case for examining how the sexuality of Haitian men who have sex with men shapes and organizes their transnational relationships in the socio-structural conditions of their lives in Haiti and its diaspora. This has significant implications for studying the interplay of transnationalism, diaspora, and sexuality.

RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

My research makes the following three contributions to sociological and geographic scholarship on diaspora and transnationalism and the sociology of sexualities:

1. Homosexuality shapes transnationalism

As I develop in chapter one, by arguing that homosexuality shapes transnationalism, I demonstrate how the sexuality of migrants and nonmigrants is a dimension of power (Foucault 1980, 1991; Heiskala 2001; Cantú et al. 2009; Power 2011; Reed 2013; Carrillo 2017), which allows them to connect and develop to sustain intimate relationships across national borders. This means men's homosexuality is the primary reason they develop transnational relationships. This finding, which I discuss in chapter four, contributes to innovating the literature on diaspora and transnationalism that often overlooks how migrants and nonmigrants develop and sustain same-sex intimate relationships that span the borders of their home and host societies. In this sense, I show how migrants and nonmigrants connect to develop cross-border same-sex relationships and what they mean to them in Northern Haiti.

2. Homosexuality nuances long-distance nationalism

While scholars have shown how long-distance nationalism shapes migrants' transnational ties with their homeland (Stepick and Portes 1986; Stepick and Swartz 1998; Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001; Satzewich and Wong 2006; Levitt and Jaworski 2007), I argue in this thesis that homosexuality is a dimension of power that shapes and organizes same-sex intimate transnational relationships among migrants and nonmigrants in conjunction with the idea of the nation-state in a post-colonial country where homophobia is prevalent. This means that migrants may engage in long-distance nationalism through their cross-border same-sex intimate relationships with their nonmigrant partners who have stayed behind in the homeland, even though they perceive their home country as

homophobic. This adds to our understanding of how homosexuality shapes long-distance nationalism, which is central to the literature on transnationalism.

3. Homosexuality shapes homeland-diaspora relations and transnational mobility

In the literature on queer/sexual migration, scholars (Manalansan 2006; Cantú et al. 2009; Carrillo 2017, Murray 2020; Tamagawa 2020) have shown how sexuality shapes the migration and integration processes of LGBTQ+ migrants from mainly Global South contexts to the Global North. In doing so, they have shown that sexuality is a dimension of power that shapes not only why and how LGBTQ+ people move across national borders but also how they incorporate into their host societies. In this thesis, I argue that sexuality shapes how gay migrants and nonmigrants develop transnational connections and same-sex intimate relationships, leading them to migrate or temporarily move across their transnational social space, i.e., their home and host countries. As I discuss in chapter six, doing so contributes to the literature on queer/sexual migration by showing that sexuality not only shapes LGBTQ+ migrants' migration and integration processes but also shapes their mobility across transnational social spaces.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

In 2022, transnational migrants sent an estimated 647 billion US dollars in remittances to their families and friends in low- and middle-income countries[4]. This number represents a five-percent increase compared to the 597 billion US dollars they remitted in 2021. While this remittance increase varies across regions, the World Bank reports that remittances migrants sent to Latin America and the Caribbean increased by 9.3 percent compared to the previous year[5]. This money flow exemplifies the

[4] "Migration and Development Brief". Article published in November 2022 by Knomad.org. Retrieved: https://www.knomad.org/publication/migration-and-development-brief-37

[5] "Remittances Grow 5% in 2022, despite Global Headwinds". Article published on November 30, 2022, by WorldBank.org and retrieved here: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/11/30/remittances-grow-5-percent-2022

strong transnational connections migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean maintain with their loved ones back home. Also, it points to their vital role in the region's socioeconomic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Among Caribbean nations, Haiti was one of the top remittance-recipient countries in 2022. The estimated 3.1 billion US dollars Haitian nonmigrants received from migrants across the Haitian diaspora represented more than sixty percent of foreign cash inflows[6]. In 2020, Haitian remittances made up thirty-seven percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product[7], making Haiti one of the largest recipients of remittances in the world[8]. These numbers point to the significant impact that Haitian migrants have had on Haitian society. However, while Haitian migrants are often perceived as having a positive economic impact on Haiti, some are criticized for engaging in homosexual behaviours, seemingly infringing on 'traditional' family values in a largely conservative 'Christian' society.

This revives old debates about migrants' role in using their money to normalize homosexual relationships and to pervert sexual morality and 'acceptable' gender norms among nonmigrants in Haiti. Although homosexuality has always existed in Haiti (Lescot and Magloire 2002) and that romantic and intimate relationships between gay men in Haiti and the diaspora have long existed (Migraine-George 2014), homosexuality is considered a cultural product imported from Western nations, supposedly imposed onto local men by Haitian migrants because of their higher socioeconomic status upon emigrating from the Caribbean Island. From this perspective,

[6] "Haiti's Turnaround and Its Impact on Remittances". Article published on November 15, 2022. Retrieved: https://www.thedialogue.org/blogs/2022/11/haitis-turnaround-and-its-impact-on-remittances/#:~:text=Haitian%20remittances%20reached%20US%24%203.1%20billion%20in%202022.

[7] "Haitian Families and Loss of Remittances During the COVID-19 Pandemic". Article written by Toni Cela and Louis Herns Marcelin and published online by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development on May 29, 2020. retrieved here: https://oecd-development-matters.org/2020/05/29/haitian-families-and-loss-of-remittances-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/

[8] "Haitian Immigrants in the United States". Article written by Kira Olsen-Medina and Jeanne Batalova. It was published by the Migration Policy Institute on August 12, 2020, and revised on September 22, 2021. Retrieved here:https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/haitian-immigrants-united-states-2018

homosexuality among Haitian men in Haiti can seemingly exist only through monetary transactions or economic relationships with Haitians abroad.

Various Haitian religious leaders and political groups have promoted such reasoning as to why some men in Northern Haiti are involved in same-sex intimate cross-border relationships with migrants across the Haitian diaspora. While it is essential to examine how same-sex intimate relationships between men in Northern Haiti and those in the Haitian diaspora develop and unfold in the socioeconomic context of Haiti, it is critical to understand that the socioeconomic context of Haiti or any other country does not inherently turn straight men gay. If it did, most men who live in extreme poverty in Haiti would have already 'turned' gay. Suppose money is the only reason men in Northern Haiti maintain intimate same-sex transnational relationships with Haitian migrant partners. In that case, it becomes difficult to understand how and why some of these transnational relationships last a decade, especially as the partners involved are unmarried or do not have children.

Furthermore, as this thesis will show, some of these same-sex intimate transnational relationships do not involve money transfers from migrants to nonmigrants but sharing ideas, knowledge, and information about migration or how to develop community organizations and fight for LGBTQ+ rights in Haiti. In other words, these transnational relationships are configured around sending social and political remittances, shaping how some gay men openly express their gender and sexuality in Northern Haiti. If money were the only *raison d'être* of these relationships, it would be challenging to understand how some gay men in Northern Haiti use the social and political remittances they receive from migrants to resist discrimination and stigmatization in the Haitian political and religious context of postcolonial homophobia.

Lastly, while it is critical to understand that homosexuality shapes same-sex transnational relationships among men, it is equally important not to lose sight of the fact that migrants' money may attract some poor, opportunistic men in Haiti's impoverished context to pursue intimate relationships

with gay migrants from the Haitian diaspora. However, it is crucial also to consider that Haitian men who have sex with men may share a common experience of homosexuality as an object of discrimination and stigmatization in Northern Haiti and the Haitian diaspora, which creates an imagined community based on a common fate, motivating them to seek intimate relationships among themselves and to send remittances to support each other. From this standpoint, this thesis examines how homosexuality shapes and organizes same-sex intimate transnational relationships among Haitian men in the socioeconomic and political context of Northern Haiti.

RESEARCH SITE

The research site is the northern region of Haiti. The selection of this site to study how homosexuality shapes and organizes transnational processes and relationships among Haitian migrants and nonmigrants has two purposes. First, Northern Haiti is rarely considered in studying Haitian migration and diaspora or homosexuality in Haiti. Previous research has mainly focused on Haitians living in or migrating from the capital city of Haiti, Port-au-Prince, generalizing these findings to the rest of Haiti. Some notable exceptions can be found in the work of Cédric Audebert (2006) and Handerson Joseph (2015), who highlight the different regions in Haiti from which Haitian immigrants in Miami and Brazil originate. Otherwise, research on LGBTQ+ populations (Dunbar et al. 2020, 2021; Durban-Albrecht 2022) and Haitian migrations (Labelle et al. 1983; Glick Schiller and Fouron 1999, 2001) do not often analyze the specificity[9] of Northern Haiti in terms of its emigration pathways, diaspora relations, and local perceptions and experience of homosexuality. My thesis fills this gap in the literature.

Second, Northern Haiti, specifically Cap Haitian, is considered a must-see tourist region for the Haitian diaspora. It is a bastion of diasporic projects and transnational mobility in Haiti because

[9] For a longer discussion of Northern Haiti's socio-historical, economic, political, and environmental context, please research to Chapter Two, where I contextualize this region in terms of its relations with the Haitian diaspora.

of its relative proximity to the Dominican Republic (DR) and Miami. These are two essential poles of the Haitian diaspora, where more affluent segments of the Haitian population in this region regularly travel to do commerce, go to the doctor, visit family members, shop, or go on vacation. Those who do not travel to these places hear accounts that Haitian travellers tell them upon their return. Therefore, the geographic location of Northern Haiti, its tourist attractions, and its relative political stability and security compared to Haiti's capital city, Port-au-Prince, make it an ideal place for men in Haiti and its diaspora to meet, develop, and maintain same-sex intimate transnational relationships.

© Copyright Haiti Tour: Photo of Cap Haitian. Retrieved on July 7th, 2023.

Moreover, according to commonly shared local perceptions, most Haitians in Cap Haitian have a member of their family that is considered a '*dyaspora*', meaning someone who emigrated from Northern Haiti and lives overseas. These *dyasporas* visit their family members in Northern Haiti during Christmas, Haitian Carnivals in February, and Easter and Summer breaks. Those who cannot visit their families send remittances and maintain contact with them through social media and other platforms, such as WhatsApp. The visit of Haitian nonmigrants to diasporic poles in the Dominican

Republic and Miami and migrants' visits from multiple poles of the Haitian diaspora to Cap Haitian contribute to producing specific perceptions of the Haitian diaspora as wealthy, which shape the same-sex intimate transnational relationships among men in the northern region of Haiti and the Haitian diaspora. Therefore, using Northern Haiti as a research site allows decentering the hegemonic role of capital cities in studying transnational migration and mobility to focus on how peripheral regions and cities contribute to our understanding of human migration and transnational mobility.

DISSERTATION PLAN

To examine how homosexual identity and practices shape and organize intimate transnational relationships among Haitian migrants and nonmigrants, I will use the following plan. Building on this introduction, I use the first chapter to review related literature and expand on how my thesis will fill the identified gaps to contribute to sociological and geographic scholarships on diaspora and transnationalism and the sociology of sexualities. Next, I use chapter two to describe Northern Haiti's socio-historical, economic, political, and environmental context in detail.

In chapter three, I discuss my methodology and reflect on my fieldwork experience. In the first half of this chapter, I discuss my research design, conceptual frameworks, research site, the recruitment of participants, and the conduction of fieldwork and interviews in Northern Haiti. In the second half, focusing on reflexivity, I discuss some ethical issues I faced during my fieldwork by concentrating on what I refer to as perceived insider status. I discuss my findings in three subsequent chapters. They follow a narrative arch, which examines how these intimate transnational relationships start, what they mean to those involved, and how they are sustained across space and time.

In chapter four, I examine how homosexuality and transnational space shape how men in Northern Haiti perceive, connect, and develop same-sex intimate cross-border relationships with migrants across the Haitian diaspora. This chapter provides a rich descriptive analysis of how men in

the socioeconomic context of Northern Haiti use homosexual spaces to connect and develop intimate cross-border relationships with other men across the Haitian diaspora. In doing so, this chapter provides us with an examination of how men in Northern Haiti understand what seemingly motivates Haitian men who have sex with men in the diaspora to be involved in these transnational relationships with them.

In chapter five, I analyze how homosexuality and transnational space shape how men in Haiti and the diaspora navigate same-sex intimate relationships across borders. In doing so, I examine how they negotiate economic, social, and political remittances from migrant partners and what these mean to them in the context of socioeconomic precarity, their often-heteronormative families, and the local community in Northern Haiti. This chapter also addresses how men in Northern Haiti negotiate tensions, contradictions, conflicts, and power struggles inherent to their same-sex intimate transnational relationships.

Chapter Six examines how homosexuality and transnational space enable or inhibit the maintenance or sustainability of same-sex intimate transnational relationships among men in Haiti and those in the Haitian diaspora over time. In doing so, I delve into how Haitian nonmigrants form life projects with their migrant partners and how these projects shape their lives in the homeland and the Haitian diaspora. In the concluding chapter, I discuss this thesis's contributions, implications, limitations, and future directions.

Publicly available photo of a *Masisi* defile in Haiti.

CHAPTER I:

LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH CONCEPTUALIZATION

A focus on how a sexual minority group in one of the most intensive migrant-sending countries in the Caribbean and the world navigates intimate relationships with migrant partners scattered across the Americas and Europe presents an opportunity to expand the literature on diaspora, transnationalism, and sexualities. To understand how my thesis contributes to such scholarship, I first take stock of the diaspora concept to clarify how I use it to expand our understanding of diaspora-homeland relations.

Second, I review the concept of transnationalism to contextualize the multidimensional ties that Haitian migrants have maintained with nonmigrants in Haiti since the 1950s. In doing so, I discuss how my dissertation on same-sex intimate transnational relationships among men contributes to existing transnationalism scholarship. Next, I review the literature on sexualities to address how homosexuality shapes and organizes transnational processes and intimate cross-border relationships among gay men. I build on this literature to introduce the notion of homosexual transnational space. Finally, I discuss the scholarly significance of my new concept.

The Concept of Diaspora

Originally used to refer to the Jewish dispersal from Jerusalem (Safran 1991), sociologists have theorized the concept of diaspora (Cohen 1997; Vertovec 1997; Dufoix 2008) by empirically examining how globally dispersed migrant populations form diasporic identities as they maintain relationships with co-ethnic members in both their host society and their homeland. Homeland here is understood as an 'imagined community' (Anderson [1983] 2006) with an overarching national identity that provides ethnic community members located on a specific territory or dispersed throughout the world with a sense of cohesion and belonging. Building on this understanding of the

homeland as an imagined community, sociologists have shown how exile, displacement, loss, alienation, and a yearning for the homeland shape how complex diasporic identities are formed and maintained among globally dispersed populations across space and time.

An example of this theoretical approach can be found in Robin Cohen's ([1997] 2022) work titled *Global Diasporas*, in which he describes how the construction of the homeland as an imagined community is central to the formation of different types of diasporic communities, such as the Jews, Africans, and Armenians' victim diasporas, indentured Indians' labour diaspora, the British imperial diaspora, the Lebanese and Chinese trade diasporas, and the Sindhis and Caribbean peoples' de-territorialized diasporas. As he examines these different types of diasporas, he shows the central role of the homeland, as an imagined community, in shaping how diasporic populations build co-ethnic communities while integrating socially, economically, and politically into their host societies.

Another example is Paul Gilroy's (1993) and Stuart Hall's (2006) research on Black diasporas. Gilroy, for instance, shows how Black populations across different continents use African culture as an imagined community to remain connected despite their dispersal originated by the transatlantic slave trade. In doing so, he demonstrates how 'Black Atlantic political culture' (Gilroy 1993) provides a sense of belonging to Black diasporas as they share a history of slavery and various attempts to acquire meaningful citizenship in post-emancipation societies. Fundamental to the sociological scholarship on diaspora is an understanding that members of diasporic communities develop and maintain a homeland-abroad nexus despite living different experiences in multiple host societies. The homeland-abroad nexus then provides diasporic populations with a sense of social cohesion and belonging to their ethnic communities and a solid orientation to their homeland.

In socio-cultural geography, scholars apprehend the concept of diaspora by examining how space – generally defined as an objective location or area (Tuan 1977) – shapes the formation of diasporic communities across the globe (Ma Mung 1994). In doing so, they develop concepts such as

the multipolarity of migration fields (Simon 1981; Ma Mung 1994) and the inter-polarity of relationships (Rios and Adiv 2010) to capture how space configures the process of identity formation and the dynamics of relationships among diasporic communities worldwide. The multipolarity of migrations refers to the multiple locations where migrant populations resettle outside their homeland. These locations are named diasporic poles, whereas the inter-polarity of relationships refers to the relationships that migrants maintain with co-ethnic communities in multiple diasporic poles and their homeland.

Focusing on these two dimensions of diaspora, geographers Cédric Audebert (2012) and Romanovski Zéphirin (2019), for instance, use their respective works to illustrate how globally dispersed Haitian migrants develop a diasporic identity while maintaining socioeconomic and political relationships with Haitians located in different diasporic poles around the world. Drawing from his fieldwork in Miami and secondary data from other countries, Audebert (2012) provides a convincing analysis of how Haitian music, cinema, food, literature, festivals, and other cultural artifacts – produced in the homeland and diasporic communities – circulate and connect Haitians to different poles of the Haitian diaspora.

Using their empirical research in South America, Zéphirin (2019) and Audebert and Joseph (2022) demonstrate how Haitians use migrant networks in multiple poles of the Haitian diaspora to materialize their migration projects from one country to another. In addition to these scholars, Regine O. Jackson (2013) brought together scholars from different disciplines in her edited volume to explore how, why, and the extent to which Haitians in specific places use the concept of diaspora as a signifier – one that gives shared cultural meaning to their migration experiences and their relationships with compatriots in Haiti and abroad. Together, these scholars show that the notion of space, understood in its multipolar and interpolar dimensions, fundamentally shapes the process of diasporic identity formation and transnational relationships among Haitians scattered worldwide.

Critique of the diaspora literature

While scholars have produced significant literature to show how globally dispersed migrant populations form diasporas, critics have pointed out that diaspora literature tends to celebrate the formation of diasporic identity and communities as 'bounded' groups (Brubaker 2004). In doing so, critics argue that diaspora scholars tend to neglect or under-analyze potential intra-group differences, which may hinder diasporic communities' sense of cohesion and belonging, and their homeland orientation (Bauböck and Faist 2010). In this vein, Rogers Brubaker points out that how scholars conceptualize diaspora may give the impression that diasporic communities are 'bounded entities' with a fixed common identity primarily oriented to their homelands and mainly mobilized to foster cohesive relationships with their compatriots (Brubaker 2004).

Brubaker argues that the conceptualization of diasporic identity through its inherent homeland orientation may not be a characteristic shared by all members of an ethnic community. Instead, some individuals or ethnic groups within a community may have specific interests in developing a diasporic identity with a particular "idiom, stance, and claim" (Brubaker 2004:1). He asserts that "we should think of diaspora in the first instance as a category of practice, and only then, and ask how it can fruitfully be used as a category of analysis… As an idiom, stance, and claim, diaspora is a way of formulating the identities and loyalties of a population" (Ibid: 12). Brubaker's proposition has important theoretical and methodological implications. Theoretically, it serves as a cautionary tale, warning us of the danger of essentializing diasporas as bounded groups with a fixed identity. Methodologically, it forces us to find instances where different meanings may be associated with the term diaspora.

My use of the diaspora concept in this thesis

Building on Brubaker's critique, my research primarily uses the concept of diaspora as an idiom, a claim, and a stance as it is commonly used in the Haitian Creole language – *dyaspora*. Indeed,

the term diaspora is used in Haiti as an idiom to refer to Haitians who emigrate from Haiti for various reasons, such as political instability and repression, insecurity, blocked socioeconomic mobility, and generalized corruption and poverty, among others, to seek a better future for themselves and their family back home. The term diaspora is also used as a claim by nonmigrants in the homeland to mobilize and receive socioeconomic support from migrants located in multiple poles of the Haitian diaspora (Glick Schiller 2001; Orozco 2006; Joseph 2017). Finally, the term diaspora is used by Haitian politicians and religious leaders in the homeland as a stance against a category of diasporic individuals, whom they label as perverts, immoral, and the like.

However, unlike Brubaker and other scholars whose research uses the diaspora concept to examine how migrants form diasporic identities and communities abroad while engaging in social, economic, and political relations with compatriots in the homeland, my research focuses primarily on how nonmigrants, i.e., those who have stayed in the homeland perceive and relate socially, economically, and politically to their compatriots in the diaspora. In doing so, my research centers on the perspective of nonmigrants as they navigate transnational relationships with diasporic individuals from the homeland. This fills a gap in diaspora scholarship that does not often pay attention to how nonmigrants in the homeland perceive diasporas nor how they develop and maintain relationships with them.

Furthermore, building on Brubaker's (2005) and Bauböck and Faist's (2010) critiques, my dissertation provides a new space to understand how homosexuality shapes diaspora-homeland relations. Indeed, these scholars have pointed out that analyzing intra-group differences within diasporic communities is crucial to understanding how diasporas form ethnic communities abroad and relate to compatriots in the homeland. More importantly, they have argued that intra-group differences, including political ideologies, religious affiliations, and class, may hinder some diasporic individuals' sense of belonging to their ethnic community abroad. This may also complicate their

perceived orientation to the homeland as their imagined community.

Victor Satzewich (2002) illustrates this point in his scholarship on Ukrainian diasporic communities in North America by revealing that "the story of Ukrainian diaspora community life in the West is one of conflict, struggle, and hostility between Ukrainians of different political persuasions, religious affiliations, classes and waves of immigration" (2002:17). Furthermore, Satzewich argues that despite their differences, Ukrainians in North America developed a strong orientation toward their homeland even though few seemed willing to return or to move to their ancestral homeland. While Satzewich (2002), Brubaker (2005), and Bauböck and Faist (2010) show that intra-group differences of class, political and religious affiliations are essential to understand how some diasporic individuals relate to co-ethnic members and the homeland as opposed to others, I argue that homosexuality may be another critical factor of intra-group difference that shapes diaspora-homeland relations.

Applying this to my thesis, I contend that homosexuality is a factor of intra-group difference that may complicate some gay Haitian migrants' sense of belonging and relationships with Haitian communities in the diaspora and the homeland. Diaspora scholars may overlook such complications based on a homogenizing view of ethnicity, which raises the question of how sexuality shapes LGBTQ+ diasporic individuals' relations with their co-ethnic communities abroad and in their homeland. This constitutes another gap in the literature. While this thesis does not address intimate relationships among gay men in the Haitian diaspora, its empirical analysis of how homosexuality shapes and organizes how men in Haiti engage in same-sex intimate transnational relationships with migrants in the Haitian diaspora may be a starting point to fill this gap in the social scientific literature on diaspora.

Taking Stock of Transnationalism

Transnationalism is defined in migration studies as a pattern of migration in which persons, best identified as 'transmigrants,' migrate and yet maintain or establish ongoing 'connections' such as

familial, affective, economic, religious, political, or social relations in the state from which they moved, even as they also forge such 'relationships' in the new state or states in which they resettled (Glick Schiller et al. 1995:48). Their lives depend on "multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and their public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state" (ibid). This theorization of transnationalism has effectively rejected the conceptualization of immigrants' identity as uprooted people with no or little connection with their home countries. It has instead conceptualized migrants as active participants in the lives of both their home and host countries (Ong 1999; Castles and Miller 2009; Safi 2010; Ley 2013).

In so doing, it has permitted decentering our understanding of immigrants' identity and sense of belonging as pertaining to one singular nation-state and redirecting our focus on the simultaneous multilocality and multi-territoriality of transmigrants' identity and belonging (Glick Schiller and Fouron 1999; Portes 1997; Faist 2000; Levitt 2001; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Tan et al. 2018). While the transnationalism framework has provided significant insights into migrants' lived experiences across international borders in the 1990s and early 2000s, it has been criticized for lacking a state-, generation-, gender-, race-, and class-based analysis and an understanding of migrants' relationships with nonmigrants. To fill these gaps, scholars have conducted research showing that gender significantly shapes transnationalism, as women tend to engage in transnational activities differently than men (Goldring 2001; Pessar and Mahler 2003; Mahler and Pessar 2006).

Others showed that transnationalism is not only an individual or family matter, but states also significantly engage in transnational activities (Arat-Koc 2006). Additionally, scholars demonstrated that race and class intersectionally shape transnationalism as some well-off migrants, such as White Americans (Matthews and Satzewich 2006) or some business-class migrants in Canada (Hiebert and Ley 2006) engage in transnational activities with their homelands differently than low-income immigrants. Other scholars showed that second-generation immigrants engage differently in

transnational activities than first-generation ones (Portes and Rumbault 2001; Itzigshon and Saucedo 2002; Soehl and Waldinger 2012). For instance, Alejandro Portes and his collaborators demonstrated that some migrants might engage in transnational activities due to discrimination and/or lack of socioeconomic mobility in their host societies. Thomas Soehl and Roger Waldinger show that transnational activities among second-generation immigrants are "strongly affected by earlier experiences of and exposure to home country influences" (Soehl and Waldinger 2012:778).

The body of literature above has significantly expanded our understanding of how different categories of migrants engage in transnational relations with compatriots in their homeland. Implicit in this literature is a view that cross-border relationships between those who have migrated to more prosperous countries and those who have stayed behind in low-income countries are structured by significant socioeconomic inequality. Such inequality produces tensions, contradictions, and conflicts that affect how migrants and nonmigrants perceive each other and experience their transnational relationships at the individual and community levels.

Transnationalism and Socioeconomic Inequality

Scholars have shown that the inequality of resources between migrants and nonmigrants, socioeconomic status, and power play significant roles in shaping the relationships that migrants maintain with their family and friends staying behind (Goldring 1998; Levitt 2001; Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001; Satzewich and Wong 2006; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Carling 2008; Castles et al. 2019). In doing so, scholars have demonstrated that migration to wealthier countries tends to provide migrants with a higher socioeconomic status in their host societies, increasing the inequality of resources between them and those staying home (Castles et al. 2014). Drawing from her fieldwork in Mexico, Luin Goldring (1998) asserts that unequal resources between migrants and nonmigrants grant the former significant power and status in their homelands, putting them in a relational superiority vis-à-vis the latter.

Based on research interviews conducted respectively in Haiti and Cape Verde, Nina Glick Schiller and George E. Fouron (2001) and Jørgen Carling (2008) have demonstrated that migrants' higher social status and economic resources significantly shape how nonmigrants perceive them in the homeland. These scholars have also shown that local perceptions of migrants in the homeland affect how nonmigrants interact with them, how they formulate claims of family membership and ethnic loyalty, and how they understand and participate in migrants' projects in home communities. Studying the role of nonmigrants in facilitating the building of migrants' housing projects and businesses in their homelands, Luin Goldring (1998) and Jørgen Carling (2008) have provided significant insights into how the inequality of resources between migrants living in the United States and the Netherlands and nonmigrants living in Mexico and Cape Verde produces significant tensions that shape their relationships.

Goldring (1998) and Carling (2008) have respectively shown that migrants often must travel to their homelands to ensure that the funds they send to their family members and kinship networks are effectively used to materialize their projects. Such trips often result in difficult conversations, disputes, mistrust, and broken relationships with families and kinships in the homeland. This has significant implications for migrant-nonmigrant relationships. However, while this literature has provided insightful data on how socioeconomic inequality shapes migrant-nonmigrant relations, a significant gap remains. Scholars have rarely included the experience of LGBTQ+ people in their analyses of how migrants and nonmigrants negotiate socioeconomic inequality while navigating transnational relations and projects such as the building of houses and businesses in the homeland.

Instead, scholars have often analyzed how migrants and nonmigrants negotiate socioeconomic inequality in transnational relations and homeland projects through a heteronormative framework. As such, migrants are normatively presented as heterosexual individuals developing transnational relationships and projects with their heteronormative families and kinship networks in their

homelands. Therefore, we know little about how LGBTQ+ migrants and nonmigrants experience and negotiate unequal resources, socioeconomic statuses, and expectations as they navigate transnational relationships and projects in the homeland. My research innovates the transnationalism scholarship by focusing on how nonmigrants in Haiti negotiate socioeconomic inequality as they navigate same-sex intimate transnational relationships with their migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora.

Transnationalism and Sexuality

The literature discussed above has expanded the transnationalism framework by highlighting how the state, generational differences, gender, race, and class affect transnational relationships that migrants maintain with nonmigrants. However, there is still a paucity of research focusing on how sexuality and, more specifically, homosexuality shapes transnationalism. When scholars address how sexuality shapes transnational connections and relationships between migrants and nonmigrants, they mainly study how heterosexual couples (McLeod and Burrows 2014) or heterosexual families (Landolt and Wei Da 2005; Mazzucato and Schans 2011; Carling et al. 2012; Mahler and Pessar 2006; Baldassar and Merla 2014; Baldassar et al. 2016) sustain relationships across borders. Studying the interplay of transnationalism and sexuality, Danae McLeod and Roger Burrows (2014) have shown that intimate transnational relationships among heterosexual couples affect migrant partners' decisions to return to their home countries.

Analyzing the intersections of transnationalism, gender, and sexuality, Jørgen Carling, Cecilia Menjívar, and Leah Schmalzbaeur (2012) have revealed that heterosexual parents practise cross-border parenthood by relying on broader networks of gender relations in both the home and host country. In the same vein, Loretta Baldassar and Laura Merla (2014) demonstrate how heterosexual transnational families rely on the help of extended family members to care for their loved ones. In doing so, these scholars have shown that transnationalism intersects with a traditional understanding

of gender roles and sexuality to fashion the reciprocal, though uneven, exchange of caregiving between heterosexual migrants and nonmigrants.

These studies have provided insights into how gender and sexuality structure the dynamics of transnational relationships in complex ways. However, by often taking heterosexual research participants as the default migrants and nonmigrants, we know little about the complex dynamics that shape transnational relationships among LGBTQ+ people. This is the key objective of my thesis, which aims to examine how homosexuality shapes and organizes same-sex cross-border relationships among migrants and nonmigrants.

Homosexuality and Immigration

Like heterosexuality, the concept of homosexuality was invented in the 19th century to describe the sexual behaviour and social identity of men who have sex with men and women who have sex with women (Foucault 1978, Hansen 1979; Weeks 1981; Kinsman 1987; Katz 2007). As sexual practices, homosexuality has existed since time immemorial, and it is part of the continuum of human sexuality (Kinsey et al. 1948; Kinsley et al. 2003). As a social identity, homosexuality has been developed amid increased urbanization and industrialization in North America and Europe at the crux of medical and religious discourses (D'emilio and Freedman 1997; Thibault 2010). It gained significant visibility in North America during gay liberation movements in the 1970s and the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s. Today, homosexuality refers to same-sex desire, identity, and behaviours, although the umbrella term LGBTQ+ in North American societies has replaced it.

Scholarships on homosexuality (McIntosh 1968; Plummer 1981; Green 2002, 2011; Simon and Gagnon 2003; Weeks 2007) have shown that homosexuality is as socially constructed as heterosexuality (Katz 2007). This means that how homosexuality is defined, perceived, and used in society is a product of human activity. As such, it has its "concrete institutional forms" and is imbued with meanings, conflicts of interests, and internal politics that are culturally specific" (Rubin 1984:151).

Scholarships on the sexuality of migration (Nagel 2003; Luibhéid 2004; Manalansan 2006; Cantú et al. 2009; Carrillo 2017; Murray 2020; Tamagawa 2020) have drawn on this understanding of sexuality to show that homosexuality is a dimension of power with concrete institutional forms, meanings, and politics that shape migration from the Global South and immigrant integration processes into the Global North.

From this standpoint, Lionel Cantú (1999, 2009) and Héctor Carrillo (2004, 2017) have demonstrated how homosexuality intersects with socioeconomic status and region of origin in Mexico to affect gay Mexicans' decisions to migrate from or to stay in their homeland. Similarly, Masami Tamagawa (2020) has shown that favourable policies toward homosexuality drive migration from Japan to the United States, Australia, and Canada and shape how LGBT Japanese migrants integrate into these societies. David Murray (2020) has shown that sexuality forms a crucial component of the Canadian nation-state's gatekeeping apparatus that shapes queer refugees' integration outcomes in Canada. In doing so, he shows how the construction and understanding of 'authentic' versus 'fake' LGBT refugees by the Canadian state determine whether refugee claimants are granted asylum or face incarceration and deportation.

This body of work has undoubtedly illuminated how homosexuality has the power to drive migration and shape LGBTQ+ migrants' integration into various receiving countries. As a result, we have gained invaluable insights into how the construction, meanings, and politics of homosexuality shape the lived experience and life outcomes of LGBTQ+ migrants. However, their research does not delve into how homosexuality may be a solid reason why LGBTQ+ migrants and nonmigrants develop and maintain transnational relationships, irrespective of their migration projects. Hence, my research fills this gap by examining how homosexuality shapes how Haitian nonmigrants develop and maintain intimate transnational relationships with migrants.

CONCEPTUALIZING HOMOSEXUAL TRANSNATIONAL SPACE

Building on scholarship intersecting migration and sexuality, I argue in this thesis that sexuality is a dimension of power that intersects with socioeconomic inequality and transnational space to shape cross-border connections and same-sex intimate relationships involving migrants and nonmigrants. Paramount to an understanding of sexuality as a dimension of power is that homosexual identity and practices enable transnational connections and same-sex intimate cross-border relationships among men. In turn, these connections and intimate relationships shape the sexuality of nonmigrants and migrants, the remittances they share, and their cross-border mobility across a transnational social space.

Applying this to my thesis, I argue that homosexual identity and practices enable cross-border connections among men who identify as gay, bisexual, pansexual, trans or men who have sex with men in Haiti and the Haitian diaspora. Second, homosexual identity and practices shape how they develop and maintain same-sex intimate transnational relationships and organize the sending of economic, social, and political remittances between the Haitian diaspora and Haiti. Third, homosexual identity and practices enable the transnational mobility of migrants and nonmigrants across the Haitian transnational social space. Finally, these intimate transnational relationships shape the sexuality of nonmigrants and structure their lives and projects in Northern Haiti and the Haitian diaspora.

Sexuality as a Dimension of Power

I define power here not in its distributive (Weber 1978; Mills 2000) or collective form (Parsons 2013) but in its structural form (Foucault 1980, 1981,1991). Indeed, unlike Max Weber (1978), who views power as an institutionalized form of domination of some people over others or Talcott Parsons (2013), who views power as a zero-sum game resource, Michel Foucault's (1991) structural approach posits that power is not to be conceived as "a property but as a strategy… that one should decipher in a network of relations, constantly in tension, in activity, rather than a privilege that one might

possess" (1991:26). Furthermore, Foucault argues that "power invests them [social actors], is transmitted by them and through them, just as they themselves, in their struggle against it resist the grip it has on them" (Foucault 1991:27). Foucault's understanding of power as a structure is central to my analysis of sexuality and my conceptualization of the Homosexual Transnational Space, as it decenters the source of power from state institutions or other forms of social organizations to extend it to any network of relations among social actors.

From this perspective, I do not theorize sexuality as a dimension of the Haitian state power that exerts control or domination over Haitian men who have sex with men to regulate their sexuality according to heterosexual norms – although the Haitian state does so (Durban 2022). Instead, I decenter the state view of power from my analysis to redirect our focus on the power of sexuality as a structure that shapes how Haitian migrants and nonmigrants develop and sustain same-sex intimate transnational relationships. In other words, I see sexuality as acting as a structural – and not institutional – dimension of power, which migrants and nonmigrants use to connect across borders and develop same-sex intimate relationships, affecting their lives and projects in the context of their families, kinships, friendship networks, and local communities.

As Risto Heiskala (2001) puts it, "Foucault does not understand power as a resource," as Parsons understands it, "but as a network of relations which determines the identities of subjects" (2001:245). In the case of Haitian migrants and nonmigrants, their homosexual identity and practices can be understood as being shaped by a shared experience of stigmatization and discrimination in the specific socio-historical, cultural, economic, and political context of Haiti and its diaspora. As I discuss in chapters four to six, I see their homosexual identity and practices as constituting and grounding networks of relations that shape Haitians' social identities and sexual practices across the Haitian transnational social space. In this sense, Foucault's conceptualization of power is critical to understanding how homosexual identity and practices structure and organize transnationalism among

migrants and nonmigrants. Indeed, as a 'structuring-structured structure' (Bourdieu 1977), homosexual practices structurally shape the social identity of gay migrants and nonmigrants, which they use as a strategic power to connect and develop and sustain same-sex intimate relationships that span national borders.

Furthermore, as a strategic power, migrants and nonmigrants use their homosexual identity and practices to both 'conform and resist' (Power 2011:50). They use their homosexual identity and practices to resist heteronormativity across the Haitian transnational social space while also conforming to the idea of the Haitian nation as a transnational state connecting Haitians in Haiti to those in the Haitian diaspora. This means that homosexual migrants and nonmigrants resist the Haitian state's self-definition as a heterosexual nation upholding traditional family values and 'acceptable' gender and sexual norms according to which Haitian nationals should live.

By defining itself as a heterosexual nation, the Haitian state simultaneously constructs homosexuality as what Melanie Heath refers to as a 'forbidden intimacy' (Heath 2023). Gay migrants and nonmigrants resist Haitian state power through their homosexual identity and practices, which act as a form of power against the Haitian state's heteronormative construction of the nation. Such a power structures the same-sex intimate transnational relationships that men in Northern Haiti develop and sustain with migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora despite the state's construction of homosexual identity and practices as forbidden or not Haitian. And these relationships shape their lives in Northern Haiti and across the Haitian diaspora.

Paradoxically, migrants and nonmigrants who are involved in same-sex intimate cross-border relationships also conform to the state construction of Haiti as a transnational social space, including Haitians in Haiti and its diaspora (Glick Schiller et al. 1995, Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001, Audebert 2012). The Haitian state does so through long-distance nationalism (Stepick and Portes 1986; Charles 2017, 2018) and cultural geography (Audebert 2012; Audebert and Joseph 2022), anchoring

compatriots/co-ethnics/co-nationals' sense of belonging to Haiti as a nation regardless of whether they live in Haiti or the Haitian diaspora. As discussed in chapters five and six, by developing same-sex intimate relationships with Haitian migrants across the Haitian diaspora, Haitian gay men conform and contribute to the state construction of Haiti as a transnational social space where Haitians' lives are embedded regardless of whether they live in Haiti or the Haitian diaspora. From this perspective, they use their homosexual identity and practices as a power to resist heteronormativity but also to conform to nationalism through their same-sex intimate cross-border relationships.

Same-sex Intimate Relationships

In this thesis, I define same-sex intimate relationships as any intimate relationship – long-term or short-term – that men who have sex with men in Haiti and the Haitian diaspora develop and sustain across national borders. These relationships are based essentially on same-sex practices[10] among Haitian men, who may identify as gay, bisexual, pansexual, transgender, straight, or men who have sex with men. By intimate same-sex practices, I do not necessarily mean only penetrative sex between two men. Intimacy and sex can take many forms and shapes.

While some men may prioritize penetrative sex in their intimate relationships, others may enjoy other types of intimacy involving kissing, cuddling, holding hands, sitting close together or any skin-to-skin contact they do not ordinarily perform with non-intimate partners. In the case of these transnational relationships, same-sex intimacy can also involve men who share their feelings, emotions, and affection regularly with other men on the phone or using new communication technologies, such as WhatsApp or FaceTime.

Though I examine how same-sex intimacy shapes and organizes the transnational relationships that men in Northern Haiti develop and sustain with migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora, I

[10] For a longer discussion of same-sex practices, please see my discussion of recruitment strategy in my research methodology in chapter three.

do not analyze how specific types of intimacy shape their transnational relationships. As such, my analysis does not delve into how their sexual scripts and roles (Simon and Gagnon 1986; 2013; Green 2008, 2011) shape their intimate relationships. Instead, my analysis focuses primarily on how these intimate transnational relationships shape their lives in the socio-historical, cultural, economic, and political contexts of Northern Haiti. As mentioned above and discussed in chapter two, Northern Haiti's context is structured by significant socioeconomic inequality between migrants and nonmigrants. Such inequality shapes local perceptions of migrants, the types of relationships – short-term or long-term – and the projects men in Northern Haiti develop and sustain with their migrant partners residing across the Haitian diaspora.

Intimacy and Money

While socioeconomic inequality is prominently featured as one of the main variables of my analysis, money is not the central criterion I use to define the same-sex intimate transnational relationships that men in Northern Haiti develop with their migrant partners. The economic remittances that nonmigrants receive from their migrant partners were not a criterion I used to recruit participants for this research either. As I discussed in chapters three to six, there are different reasons why men in Haiti and the Haitian diaspora develop and sustain same-sex intimate transnational relationships.

Given the impoverished context of Haiti and post-colonial-homophobic discourses positing that same-sex intimate relationships among Haitian migrants and nonmigrants are based solely on migrants' money, I rigorously examine how socioeconomic inequality between migrants and nonmigrants shapes their same-sex intimate cross-border relationships. However, as shown in chapter five, these intimate relationships – especially the long-term ones – are also grounded in sharing social and political remittances, i.e., sociocultural norms and political ideas.

These political ideas and sociocultural norms shape how many gay men live and form projects in the context of their families, kinships, friendship networks, and the local community in Northern Haiti. This indicates that these same-sex intimate transnational relationships mean more than 'just money' to some gay men in Northern Haiti. That being said, the boundary between sex and money in the socioeconomic context of Northern Haiti, as in many other countries (Kempadoo 1999, 2004; Zelizer 2000, 2009; Illouz 2007; Hoang 2015; Parreñas 2020), is much more porous than people may admit in popular discourse or in intimate relationships.

For instance, in *Sun, Sex, and Gold,* Kamala Kempadoo (1999) examined how sex shapes political autonomy and identity in the Caribbean. Later, in S*exing the Caribbean* (2004), she demonstrated how gender, sexuality, work, and race intersect to shape economic relations in the Caribbean. Beyond these scholarships, Kempadoo has developed an incredible body of work on how tourism, migration, sex work, and human trafficking have shaped men's and women's lives in the Caribbean. In her research, she discusses how porous the boundary between intimacy, feelings, and money can be in the Caribbean. This is also the case in Northern Haiti.

Beyond the Caribbean, Viviana Zelizer (2009) has shown in *The Purchase of Intimacy* how Americans use economic activity to create, maintain, and renegotiate intimate ties with other people. More importantly, she shows how difficult it is to maintain the right balance between money and intimacy. In *Dealing in Desire,* Kimberly Kay Hoang (2015) "looks at clients and sex workers in multiple markets to show that the worlds of high finance and benevolent giving are never divorced from the personal and intimate gendered spheres of the informal economy" in Vietnam (2015:13). In doing so, she shows how personal desires are intimately tied to aspirations for the nation in a global context of socioeconomic volatility and capitalist restructuring.

In *Cold Intimacies,* Eva Illouz (2007) shows that emotional capitalism is "a culture in which emotional and economic discourses and practices mutually shape each other" (2007:5). Furthermore,

she argues that affect becomes an essential aspect of economic behaviour in the United States. In *Illicit Flirtations,* Rhacel Salazar Parreñas ([2011] 2020) demonstrates how the conditions of trafficking, the nature of sex work, the meaning of citizenship, and the moral classification given by sex workers themselves intersect to shape intimate paid labour in Tokyo. In doing so, Parreñas (2020) shows how sex workers use their bodies and minds as capital to negotiate how much money or how many goods they should receive in return for the attention and services they provide to their clients.

While this extraordinary body of work has shown how sex work or sex tourism interacts with gender, sexuality, and the nation to intimately shape social, economic, and political relations in national and transnational contexts, my research examines primarily how homosexual intimacy intersects with transnational social space and economic inequality to shape the same-sex intimate relationships that co-ethnic/co-national migrants and nonmigrants develop and sustain across borders. In doing so, my primary goal is to examine how homosexuality shapes migrant-nonmigrant transnational relationships and what these mean to nonmigrants in the social, economic, and political contexts of their lives in their homeland. While some aspects of my research – for instance, how nonmigrants negotiate short-term intimate transnational relationships – will contribute to the existing literature on sex work and sex tourism, my thesis' overall argument directly expands scholarship at the intersections of intimacy and socioeconomic inequality in the context of migrant-nonmigrant transnationalism.

Transnational Space

In the migration literature, scholars use the term transnational to describe the connections, ties, activities, and relationships that co-ethnic/co-national migrants and nonmigrants develop and sustain across the borders of the nation-states where they live and work (Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Portes et al. 1999; Goldring 1998; Levitt 2001; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Satzewich and Wong 2006; Carling 2008; Faist 2010; Audebert 2022). The term 'transnational' allows scholars to analyze the characteristics and particularities of cross-border relationships that migrants simultaneously maintain

with nonmigrants in their homeland while they live and work in various host countries. In doing so, they have successfully shown how, why, and the extent to which migrants maintain transnational ties with nonmigrants in the homeland and vice-versa.

In the literature on transnationalism, *simultaneity* is described as the main characteristic of transnational migrants' lives, meaning that migrants remain involved in their homeland's social, cultural, economic, and political fabric as they incorporate the host society where they have resettled (Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Faist 2000; Levitt 2001, Levitt and Jaworsky 2007). Their simultaneous incorporation in at least two societies impacts the social, cultural, economic, and political contexts of migrants' home and host countries. While not all migrants remain involved in their homeland's affairs (Vertovec 1997; Portes et al. 1999; Itzigshon 2000; Faist 2000; Guarnizo 2003), research shows that a significant number of migrants tend to sustain ties with their family, kinship and friendship networks, and the local community they have left behind in the homeland. Because of migrants' simultaneous involvement in two societies, migrants' and nonmigrants' lives become embedded in a *transnational social space*, which is a "multi-layered and multi-sited [space], including not just the home and host countries but other sites around the world that connect migrants to their co-nationals and coreligionists" (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007: 131).

In a more detailed way, Thomas Faist (2013) asserts that "the idea of transnational spaces entailed considering the migratory system as a boundary-breaking process in which two or more nation-states are penetrated by, and become a part of, a singular new social space. This space involves, in part, the circulation of ideas, symbols, activities, and material culture… It also involves the border-crossing movements of people who then come to engage in transnational social relations, with implications for immigrant incorporation" (Faist 2013:448-452). Furthermore, Faist argues that "social space refers not only to physical features but also to larger opportunity structures, the social life and the subjective images, values, and meanings that the specific and limited place represents to migrants.

Space is thus different from place in that it encompasses or spans various territorial locations. It includes two or more places" (ibid).

Peggy Levitt and Nadya B. Jaworsky's (2007) and Thomas Faist's (2013) definitions of transnational social space can be used to illustrate the same-sex intimate cross-border relationships that Haitian migrants and nonmigrants develop and sustain within the Haitian transnational social space. Indeed, migrants from Haiti who now live in the United States, Canada, France, Brazil, Chile, and the Dominican Republic develop and sustain same-sex intimate cross-border relationships with nonmigrants in Haiti and vice-versa. Migrants' and nonmigrants' lives are embedded in the Haitian transnational social space. Given their higher socioeconomic status (Glick Schiller and Fouron 1999, 2001), Haitian migrants remain involved in many matters of Haiti while they live and work in the different host societies where they have resettled. Their transnational involvement with Haiti includes frequent audio/video phone calls with family, kinship, and friendship networks in Northern Haiti, along with regular travels to Haiti and other countries of the Haitian transnational social space.

As transnational migration scholars contend, cheaper communication and travel technologies facilitate transnational connections and relationships (Waldinger 2020), reinforcing the length of transnational ties and increasing the intensity of transnational activities among migrants and nonmigrants (Satzewich and Wong 2006; Simmons 2010). Haitian migrants and nonmigrants involved in same-sex intimate relationships are an excellent example of this feature of transnationalism, as they benefit from accessible communication technologies to sustain ties across the Haitian transnational social space. One of the ways Haitian migrants remain involved in Northern Haiti is through their intimate cross-border relationships with their nonmigrant partners who live in the homeland and the economic remittances they regularly send to them.

As I show in chapters five and six, Haitian migrants' remittances have a significant economic and sociocultural impact on their nonmigrant partners, their families, and the local communities in

Northern Haiti. Some of these impacts are positive, while others are negative. Given the socioeconomic inequality and power dynamics that shape migrants' and nonmigrants' relationships (Goldring 1998; Levitt 2001; Carling 2008), these same-sex intimate relationships are experienced as both positive and negative by gay nonmigrants in Northern Haiti, which I discuss in detail in chapters five and six.

Socioeconomic Inequality

As migration scholars (Goldring 1998; Levitt 2001; Satzewich and Wong 2006; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Carling 2008) have pointed out, the act of sending money and sharing ideas, information, advice, skills, and strategies – which shape the dynamics of same-sex intimate transnational relationships among Haitian men – is structured by socioeconomic inequality between migrants and nonmigrants. The act of sharing remittances can be a site of significant tensions, contradictions, conflicts, and power struggles in the socio-structural conditions of their lives in Haiti and the Haitian diaspora. From this perspective, I define socioeconomic inequality in this thesis as the inequality of socioeconomic resources between migrants and nonmigrants that shape their same-sex intimate transnational relationships.

As mentioned above, Haitians migrate to wealthier countries than Haiti – the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Through their migration, they acquire higher socioeconomic resources, e.g., money, skills, knowledge, and social capital (Portes and Landolt 1996, 2000; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2010; Lacroix et al. 2016), reinforcing inequality (Allison 1978; Blackburn 1999, Tilly 2008) between them and those who have stayed behind in the homeland (Goldring 1998; Carling 2008). Migrants' higher socioeconomic resources tend to put them in a position of relative superiority vis-à-vis nonmigrants, which shapes how they engage in transnational relationships with them. Therefore, migrants and nonmigrants must negotiate tensions, contradictions, conflicts, and power struggles that

emerge in their same-sex intimate transnational relationships because of migrants' higher socioeconomic resources across transnational social spaces.

Homosexual Transnational Space

I define the Homosexual Transnational Space as a social space imbued with homosexual meanings that intersect with socioeconomic inequality to shape local perceptions of migrants in their homeland, the development of transnational connections, and the maintenance of same-sex intimate relationships among men across national borders. As I discuss in detail in chapter four, in the case of Haiti, the homosexual meanings that Haitian men attribute to the Haitian transnational social space are shaped by Haitian men's homosexual identity and practices in Haiti's and Haitian diasporic communities' socio-historical, cultural, economic, and political contexts. In other terms, these homosexual meanings are shaped by how Haitian men experience their homosexual identity and practices as stigmatized, marginalized, and discriminated against across the Haitian transnational space in which their lives are embedded.

Their shared experience of homosexuality is the power that men in Haiti and the Haitian diaspora reclaim to connect with each other through the Haitian transnational social space, which they navigate both physically and virtually. Some examples of physical places that migrants and nonmigrants navigate are the multiple cities in Haiti, such as Cap Haitian, Port-au-Prince, and Jacmel, and tourist cities in the Dominican Republic, such as Santiago, Punta Cana, Puerto Plata, and Santo Domingo, where nonmigrants from Northern Haiti meet migrant partners visiting from the United States, Canada, France, Brazil, and Chile. Examples of virtual spaces are gay dating applications such as Grindr and gay WhatsApp and Facebook group messages, which allow nonmigrants in Northern Haiti to develop and maintain same-sex intimate relationships with migrants across the Haitian diaspora.

From this perspective, I argue that homosexuality intersects with socioeconomic inequality and transnational social space to become a homosexual transnational space, which shapes and organizes physical and virtual spaces that enable Haitian nonmigrants and migrants to meet, develop connections, and maintain same-sex intimate relationships across national borders. In doing so, it also enables their transnational mobility in the homeland and across multiple poles of the Haitian diaspora. The conceptualization of homosexual transnational space has three significant implications for the fields of transnationalism and diaspora and the sociology of sexualities, which I discuss in the following sections.

1. Homosexuality Shapes Transnationalism

Focusing on how homosexual identity and practices shape and organize transnational relationships forces us to move away from a heteronormative understanding of transnationalism, which centers around family and kinship networks as the primary reason migrants and nonmigrants develop and maintain relationships that span national borders. The focus on family and kinship networks tends to take for granted that migrants and nonmigrants are heterosexual. As a result, their transnational ties are understood in terms of strategies that families use to survive in the challenging socioeconomic contexts of their home countries (Massey et al. 1993), where jobs and/or opportunities for upward socioeconomic mobility are often scarce.

From this perspective, parents send economic remittances back home to support their children within the heteronormative structure of their family and kinship networks (Landolt 2001; Perreñas 2005; Baldassar et al. 2014). Whereas heterosexual romantic partners who live across national borders share social and economic remittances with their partners in their homeland to support them financially and help them eventually migrate to join them in their host societies through marriage and family reunification (Walsh 2009; Charsley 2013).

However, if we understand homosexuality as shaping and organizing transnationalism, it becomes clear that the sexuality of LGBTQ+ migrants may shape how they maintain transnational relationships with nonmigrants in the homeland. As a result, the remittances that LGBTQ+ migrants send to their nonmigrant partners back home may not be primarily motivated by the heteronormative logic of moral obligations toward family or kinship networks, as described in the literature. Instead, the homosexuality of those involved in these relationships may motivate them to send remittances to their intimate partners. In doing so, this focus shift raises the following questions: how does homosexuality enable and organize transnational connections and relationships LGBTQ+ migrants and nonmigrants develop and sustain? What do these transnational relationships mean to them in the often-heteronormative context of family and community in the homeland? How do LGBTQ+ nonmigrants maintain these cross-border relationships with migrants over time? And how do they affect the lives and projects of those involved?

2. Homosexuality Nuances Long-Distance Nationalism

By focusing on same-sex intimate transnational relationships among men in Haiti and their migrant partners in various countries of the Haitian diaspora and by taking Haiti as the primary unit of analysis, this thesis provides an alternative understanding of long-distance nationalism, which is often implied in transnationalism scholarship as to why migrants maintain ties with nonmigrants. Long-distance nationalism, as a nation-building project promoted by migrant-sending states and diasporic communities, draws on understanding the nation-state as an imagined community (Anderson [1986] 2020) whose members share a national culture and common fate despite their scattered geographic locations.

As such, the idea of a national culture and shared fate underlies the circulation of money, goods, knowledge, skills, and strategies from migrants to nonmigrants and, hence, from rich to poor nations (Paul 2012). Therefore, scholars have examined long-distance nationalism as a strategy that

migrant-sending states deploy to survive in a capitalist world system shaped by geopolitical and economic divides (Wallerstein 2004; Burawoy 2015), creating transnational migration from the Global South to the Global North (Bailey 2001) and encouraging migrants' financial contributions to the nation-building project of their homelands (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001).

In this regard, scholars have shown that some sending states use long-distance nationalism to promote transnational social, economic, and political relations between migrants and nonmigrants by allowing migrants to hold dual citizenship, forming ministries for nationals living abroad, and encouraging tourism from emigrants and diasporic communities to their homelands (Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Audebert 2012). Other States use long-distance nationalism to 'export' their nationals as 'migrant labour' so they can send money back home through taxes or remittances. Some examples include the transnational migration/mobility of Cuban doctors in South America and South Africa (Hansing 2017), Filipina and Indian nurses in Australia (Williams 2011), Caribbean and South Asian live-in caregivers in Canada (Preibisch and Hennebry 2011; Boyd 2017), and Mexican temporary agricultural workers in the United States (Massey et al. 1994; Cohen 2011).

In addition to money, scholars have shown that diasporic communities use available resources and opportunities in their host societies to engage in transnational political action against dictatorships and shape the national politics of the homeland (Stepick 1998; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Landolt 2008; Vu and Satzewich 2022). Transnational migrants also advocate for their homeland affairs in international organizations, such as OAS, UN, and EU, among others (Bommes and Geddes 2000). They mobilize relief support for their home communities during natural disasters (Paul 2012) or war (Satzewich forthcoming). Central to this literature is that migrants in diasporic communities develop and maintain ties with nonmigrants by sending economic, social, and political remittances back home to participate in their homeland's nation-building projects.

However, understanding homosexual identity and practices as a dimension of power that shapes transnationalism makes it clear that homosexual identity and practices not only connect LGBTQ+ migrants in diasporic communities to LGBTQ+ nonmigrants in the homeland but also underlies money and idea flows between rich and poor nations. In this sense, homosexual identity and practices may complicate the examination of the nation-state as the sole form of identification and belonging for compatriots in diasporic communities involved in same-sex intimate practices. In doing so, homosexual identity and practices can serve to nuance long-distance nationalism as one of the reasons LGBTQ+ migrants and nonmigrants maintain transnational relations. Put differently, homosexual identity and practices can become an important source of identification for LGBTQ+ migrants and nonmigrants in addition to the nation.

Applying this proposition to this thesis, I argue that homosexual identity and practices may provide men in the Haitian diaspora with an alternative source of identification and belonging in addition to the Haitian nation as a transnational social space. Therefore, homosexual identity and practices not only motivate them to establish same-sex intimate relationships with partners in Northern Haiti but also to keep transnational ties with their home country. This then forces us to investigate how homosexual identity and practices intersect with nation-state building to connect men in Haiti with those scattered across the Haitian diaspora in the Americas, the Caribbean, and Europe to develop and sustain same-sex intimate transnational relationships.

3. Homosexuality Shapes Homeland-diaspora Relations and Transnational Mobility

Examining how homosexuality shapes and organizes transnationalism among men in Haiti and their partners in the United States, Canada, France, Brazil, Chile, and the Dominican Republic allows us to understand how nonmigrants negotiate and navigate transnational relations with diasporic communities. In doing so, it offers a different entry point – i.e., the perspective of nonmigrants – to understand diaspora-homeland relations. It allows accounting for how homosexual identity and

practices shape how Haitians in the homeland engage in same-sex intimate transnational relationships with migrant partners in multiple receiving countries of the Haitian diaspora and how these relationships shape their local perceptions of and relations with diasporic communities in different host countries. This has critical implications for studying diaspora, transnationalism, and sexuality.

Theoretically, this thesis brings a sociocultural-geographic analysis of homeland-diaspora relations (Claval 2012) to the transnationalism literature, which draws from a theorization of space as a location or area imbued with sociocultural meanings (Di Meo 2008), shaping the formation of diasporic communities (Ma Mung 1994) in multiples poles of a country's migration field (Simon 1981, 2002), and organizing relations among these poles and the homeland (Rios and Adiv 2010). In the case of Haitian men who maintain same-sex intimate cross-border relationships with migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora, the space they navigate can be understood as a transnational social space (Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Faist 2000; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Audebert 2022). A transnational social space includes the homeland and the host societies where the lives of co-ethnic/co-national migrants and nonmigrants are embedded.

Combining this geographic analysis of space with the sociology of sexual migration (Luibhéid 2004; Manalansan 2006; Cantú et al. 2009; Carrillo 2017), I argue that the lives of Haitian migrants and nonmigrants who engage in same-sex intimate practices are embedded in a Homosexual Transnational Space, enabling the transnational mobility of gay migrants and nonmigrants in the homeland and across the Haitian diaspora. On the one hand, migrants from the Haitian diaspora, such as Josué's partner, travel from their host societies to other Haitian diasporic poles and the homeland to visit their nonmigrant partners. On the other hand, nonmigrants in Northern Haiti travel from their specific cities to join their migrant partners in different cities of Haiti or some poles of the diaspora, such as the Dominican Republic and Montreal.

By focusing on transnational mobility, a sociocultural-geographic analysis of these same-sex intimate relationships decenters the vision of the Global North as the rescuer of the Global South's LGBTQ+ people. Instead, it redirects our attention to how nonmigrants in Haiti embody the romantic motivation and homosexual desire that underlie the mobility of Haitian migrants from the United States, Canada, and France, for instance, to seek refuge, sexual liberation and/or romance in Haiti. However, while homosexual identity and practices as a dimension of power connect gay men and shape their intimate transnational relationships and mobility at the micro level, it is crucial to understand that it does so in the socio-structural conditions of Haiti-diaspora relations at the meso- and macro levels. This then calls me to examine the socio-structural conditions in which these same-sex intimate transnational relationships unfold.

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Photo retrieved on July 7th, 2023.

CHAPTER II:

RESEARCH CONTEXTUALIZATION

Since the 1950s, nearly five million Haitian migrants have left Haiti – a Caribbean Island of approximately twelve million inhabitants[11] – to resettle in several countries worldwide. The United States alone accounts for the largest population of Haitian migrants, estimated to be over two million; meanwhile, the rest of the Americas and Europe, approximately account for three million. As per current estimations[12], Haitian migrants have established large diasporic communities in the United States, Canada, France and its Caribbean overseas departments, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Chile, Brazil, the Bahamas, and Mexico, whereas smaller communities of Haitians have emerged in countries such as the United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Argentina, Ecuador, Colombia, and Spain. Historically, small diasporic communities of Haitians also settled in newly created African states where professional Haitians were recruited to teach at universities and schools, among other professional activities.

Throughout their migration history, Haitian migrants have epitomized the definition of transmigrants. As Nina Glick Schiller and Georges E. Fouron (1999) assert: "from the very beginning of their migration, a large number of Haitian immigrants lived their lives across borders making decisions about expenditures and consumption, child-rearing, employment, and interpersonal relationships within a network of family members and friends that included persons in Haiti and the United States" (1999:346). In this regard, Haitian migrants are not just uprooted from their homeland and re-rooted in their host country without any connections with those left behind. Rather, they became transmigrants, and their identity is shaped by the reality of their home and host countries and

[11] Estimation provided by the worldometers.info website. Accessed on June 2nd, 2023. Retrievable here: https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/haiti-population/

[12] Haitian Immigrants in the United States. Article written by Kira Olsen-Medina and Jeanne Batalova. It was published by the Migration Policy Institute on August 12, 2020 and revised on September 22, 2021. Retrieved from :https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/haitian-immigrants-united-states-2018

the multiple 'diasporic poles' (Audebert 2012; Zéphirin 2019; Audebert and Joseph 2022) where Haitians have resettled.

As previous research has shown, Haitian migrants have maintained transnational ties with nonmigrants in Haiti while simultaneously engaging in social, economic, and political integration processes in their host societies (Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Laguerre 1997; Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001; Audebert 2006). Accordingly, research has shown how factors such as gender (Lopez 2002), space (Audebert 2006, 2017; Jackson 2011; Zéphirin 2019; Audebert and Joseph 2022), culture (Labelle et al. 1983; Charier 1999; Laëthier and Jolivet 2011; Boucard 2006; Cloos et al. 2016; Bechacq 2019; Colin 2020), remittance-sending patterns (Simmons et al. 2005; Orozco 2006; Orozco and Burgess 2011; Cela et al. 2022), and race (Zéphir 1996; Laguerre 1998; Calmont 2007) have affected how Haitian migrants develop and maintain relationships with their compatriots in Haiti and the diaspora. However, sexuality (Manalansan 2006) – specifically homosexuality – which may also "structure every aspect" (Luibhéid 2004:227) of some Haitian migrants' transnational relationships with nonmigrants in Haiti has hitherto remained understudied in the literature. This leaves a gap in our understanding of how homosexuality shapes transnational relationships between migrants and nonmigrants in Haiti's socio-structural context.

The Social Construction of Homosexuality in Haiti

Michel Foucault argues that sexuality – whether hetero, homo, or other – is constructed through the "operation of social norms," which themselves derive from "institutional discourses" that come to construct "subjectivity" (Foucault 1978:58). In other words, sexuality is a practice that cannot be "studied separated from its cultural meanings" (Stein 1989:9). Foucault's post-structuralist understanding of sexuality has immensely influenced queer theory in the humanities and social science research, which have shown that "sexual identities are discursively produced" (Gamson and Moon 2004:49) within specific cultural contexts.

In Haiti, the term 'homosexual' is used to designate Haitians who do not fit into heteronormative, binary gender identities and/or 'acceptable' sexual orientation and behaviours, which were primarily imposed by French colonialism through the Catholic Church and have been reinforced by Protestant and Evangelical missionaries through various kinds of U.S. imperialist projects in Haiti (Durban-Albretch 2017; Chapman et al. 2017; Durban 2022). As such, the term 'homosexual' refers to men who have sex with men and women who have sex with women, pejoratively identified as *masisi* and *madivin* in Haitian Creole (Rahill et al. 2020; Dunbar et al. 2020). It also includes people who identify as transgender, transexual, queer, intersex, and bisexual (OFPRA 2016; Louis 2017).

In Haiti and the Haitian diaspora, homosexuality is socially constructed as taboo (Joseph 2018) or a curse provoked by evil voodoo spirits (Louis 2017), and it is often mobilized to define what the Haitian ethnic identity is in relation to others (Colin 2020) and who belongs or not to it (Boucard 2006). It operates on an implicit assumption that Haiti and Haitians are inherently heterosexual, placing same-sex desires, identity, and practices outside the imagined ethnic, racial, gender, sexual, and spatial boundaries of Haiti (Durban 2022). The social construction of homosexuality as taboo or a curse in Haiti can be understood within larger projects of political homophobia (Currier 2010; Murray 2012; Inglehart et al. 2014; McKay and Angotti 2016; Adamczyk and Pitt 2009; Adamczyk 2017) in various countries worldwide.

These political and religious projects of homophobia aim to ban the recognition of homosexuality as an acceptable social identity and sexual practices. Such projects have significant consequences on the lived experience of LGBTQ+ populations across the globe. In Haiti, although homosexuality is not criminalized by law nor punishable by imprisonment or death, political homophobia has influenced attitudes toward homosexuality, which have deteriorated in the country in the past decade. Before the 2010 devastating earthquake, Haitians viewed homosexuality as a taboo

(Louis 2017). This means that Haitians had an implicit understanding that same-sex desires and practices exist in Haiti. Still, they avoided engaging in meaningful public discussions about the experience of those who identify and live as homosexuals. Such attitudes have historical roots in the French catholic legacy, which has instituted a "don't ask, don't tell" culture that encourages homosexual identities and practices to remain private while punishing LGBTQ-identified Haitians openly with harassment and ostracization (Durban-Albretch 2017:170).

© Copyright AFP: Photo of the Haitian Senate prohibiting gay marriage in Haiti on Wednesday, August 2, 2017. Photo retrieved on July 7th, 2023.

In the 20th century, U.S. imperialist projects used Protestantism and Christian Fundamentalism to eradicate homosexuality in Haiti because it was supposedly connected to black magic practices, such as voodoo (ibid.). Following these colonial and imperialist legacies, Haitian religious leaders actively delivered anti-homosexual messages in their congregations, calling Haitian LGBTQ+ individuals pejorative names such as *masisi* and *madivin*. This name-calling represented a dominant form of harassment of homosexual Haitians. Additionally, religious fanatics occasionally orchestrated violent attacks against them in the country. Since the fatal 2010 earthquake, and under the influence

of religious and political leaders in Haiti and the Haitian diaspora, Haitians have increasingly displayed more negative attitudes toward homosexuality.

Today, they view it as a curse from evil voodoo spirits. According to many Haitians, the homosexual curse would cause natural disasters that have recently devastated the country. As a curse, homosexuality should be eradicated with church prayers and Christian conversion to prevent future devastations, as described by the Holy Bible in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah. This view on homosexuality has had real implications for how homosexuality is perceived and how LGBTQ+ Haitians are treated. For instance, Charlot Jeudy, an openly gay leader, was allegedly assassinated in November 2019 because of his pro-gay-rights stance in popular Haitian media. In October 2020, another prominent homosexual figure, Maikado, was killed in their home in Port-au-Prince.

In July 2021, the sitting Haitian President, Jovenel Moïse, was assassinated merely a year after proposing a decree that would punish people who harass and violently attack any Haitians based on their sexual orientation. His decree offered to penalize discrimination based on sexual orientation in Haiti (Noël 2020). Though the presidential decree was set to come into effect in 2022 after discussions at the Haitian parliament where it would have probably been modified from its original version (Leboucq 2020), the assassinated President was accused of normalizing homosexuality in Haiti – a nation which, according to protesters, is not ready for such an 'imported' lifestyle.

In a country facing myriad problems, ranging from sociopolitical instability, insecurity and lack of safety, criminal gang violence, food deprivation, lack of basic infrastructures and clean water, daily power shortages, underfunded school and health care systems and the perceived impossibility of achieving upward socioeconomic mobility, it is puzzling that homosexuality is at the heart of public debates and social mobilizations. As Gayle S. Rubin put it: "It is precisely at times like these, when we live with the possibility of unthinkable destruction, that people are likely to become dangerously crazy about sexuality" (Rubin 1984:143). In this sense, my research contributes to understanding how

homosexual men in Haiti negotiate their sexual identity while navigating intimate transnational relationships with their migrant partners in Haiti, where anti-homosexual attitudes are mobilized for political and religious gain.

© Copyright AFP: Photo of Haitian Christians protesting against gay marriage in Haiti on Wednesday, July 6, 2020. Photo retrieved from LaPresse.Ca on July 7th, 2023.

Migrants as 'Importers' of Homosexuality in Haiti

In 2020, some gay Haitian migrants and homosexual men were at the forefront of public debates about sexual morality in Haiti. These two groups of people – often seen as separate entities – were perceived as immoral because they engaged in sexual behaviours which infringed on 'traditional' values in the country. In July 2020, some migrants were featured in photos and videos taken during some *krèy* (orgies in English) and widely circulated on social media and WhatsApp group messages in Haiti. During these orgies, they reportedly asked perceived heterosexual women and men to engage in homosexual behaviours for money. Although they were not caught on tape asking local men and

women to perform sexual acts for money, these migrants' behaviours were interpreted as if they were converting heterosexual women and men into homosexuals based on their new habits acquired in their host societies. As such, homosexual practices and identities are perceived as inherently *not* Haitian. Instead, they are a product of globalization, which, itself, is seemingly imported from Western countries by migrants.

This construction of homosexuality as an imported product is crucial to postcolonial homophobia in Haiti (Durban 2022). It is inspired by political homophobia developed in some African nations (McKay and Angotti 2016; Currier 2010; Murray 2012) and neighbouring Caribbean countries (Smith and Kosobucki 2011; Wahab 2012; Stanislas 2014). Accordingly, homosexuality is seen as being imposed onto the general society by Haitian migrants or local Haitians who receive funding from NGOs, other international organizations, and foreign governments from countries such as Canada, the U.S., and France to promote homosexuality in Haiti. This discourse locates homosexuality outside Haiti's 'real' and 'imagined borders' (Nagel 2003).

As such, homosexual identity and practices are perceived as physically and socio-culturally distant from the 'imagined community and national identity' (Anderson 2006) to which Haitian nationals belong. Accordingly, it is only by being located outside Haiti's physical and socio-cultural border that Haitian migrants may have developed a gay identity. Therefore, the physical and socio-cultural distance between Haiti and its diaspora, along with increasing socioeconomic inequality between Haitian nonmigrants and migrants, would be why local men develop intimate transnational relationships with gay migrants.

Haitian Transnational Space as Distance and Proximity

The above discussion may illustrate how space intersects with socioeconomic inequality (Di Meo 2020) and postcolonial homophobia (Durban 2022) to shape how nonmigrants in Haiti perceive

gay migrants from the Haitian diaspora. As geographer Guy Di Meo asserts, socioeconomic inequality is an important determinant that shapes individuals in their "personhood, body, social and spatial relations, as well as in their representations of space" (Di Meo *in* Charvert and Sivignon 2020:117). Socioeconomic inequality may increase the sociocultural distance between Haitians in the homeland and those in the diaspora due to different meanings, representations, and experiences they attribute to the specific places they inhabit (Seamon and Sowers 2008). While this very well illustrates homeland-diaspora relations among Haitians, my research also posits that a critical intersectional standpoint additionally reveals that space, socioeconomic inequality, and homosexuality intersect in a different way to shape the intimate relationships that gay men in Haiti develop with those in the Haitian diaspora.

As geographer Nigel Thrift defines it, space in human geography is "the outcome of a series of highly problematic temporary settlements that *divide* and *connect* things up into different kinds of collectives which are slowly provided with the means which render them durable and sustainable" (Thrift 2003:95). He further argues that "space arises out of the hard and continuous work of building up and *maintaining* collectives by bringing different things (bodies, animals and plants, manufactured objects, landscapes) into *alignment* (ibid:105). In other words, the notion of space fundamentally shapes human activity through its ability to bring different things closer, maintain them connected, or distance them from each other.

Applying to Haitian migrations and diaspora, this understanding of space can be used to understand the social construction and perception of the Haitian transnational space as one that physically divides Haitians into communities scattered in the homeland and the diaspora but also socio-culturally, economically, and politically connects dispersed Haitian communities through a shared cultural geography (Claval 2001, 2012). Cultural geography refers to how space is imbued with cultural meanings, which shape "the relationships that individuals develop among themselves, the

networks to which they belong, the movements they create, as well as the goods and information they exchange" (Claval 2012:180).

A transnational social space is a "multi-layered and multi-sited space" that includes the homeland and the numerous host societies that connect migrants and nonmigrants from the same nation or religion (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007:131). A transnational social space is enacted by the flow of people, money, goods, products, and social-cultural-political ideas and norms that structure the lives of co-ethnic/co-national migrants and nonmigrants across international borders (Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Faist 2000; Satzewich and Wong 2006; Audebert 2022). As such, migrants' and nonmigrants' decision-making, movements, projects, and relationships are embedded in a transnational social space, impacting not only their personal lives but also the socioeconomic and political contexts of their home and host societies.

Intersecting this view of transnational social space with homosexuality (Foucault 1978; Luibhéid 2004; Cantú 2009; Carrillo 2017), the Haitian transnational space can, therefore, be understood as producing a certain sociocultural proximity between gay men in Haiti and those in the Haitian diaspora, despite living in distant geographic areas. Hence, rather than merely perceiving space as producing physical and socio-cultural distance separating gay men in Haiti from those abroad, the Haitian transnational space can also be perceived by gay men in Haiti as connecting them to Haitian gay men abroad because they may share a common socio-cultural experience of homosexuality and/or homophobia in the homeland and Haitian diasporic communities.

From this perspective, the notion of transnational space – as both distance and proximity – is central to understanding how Haitian nonmigrants connect and navigate same-sex intimate transnational relationships with Haitian migrants and whether, how, and why these relationships are maintained across time. Given that gay men in Northern Haiti and the Haitian diaspora use the Haitian

transnational social space to connect with each other, I argue that it has become a homosexual transnational space, which I introduced and discussed in chapter one.

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

The context of this study is the northern region of Haiti. It has a superficies of five-thousand-eight-hundred-forty square kilometres, representing one-fifth of Haiti's territory. It borders the Dominican Republic and is situated in relative proximity to Florida, Cuba, and the Bahamas, which are essential poles of the Haitian diaspora. Northern Haiti has an estimated population[13] of over two million people, representing over sixteen percent of Haiti's estimated eleven million people. Administratively, it encompasses the North, North-East, and North-West departments, where some of Haiti's most significant cities are located, such as Cap Haitian, Milot, Port-de-Paix, and Fort-Liberté. Northern Haiti is locally and internationally known for its historical legacy, tourist monuments, and paradisiac vacation destinations.

Historically, many events that led to the Haitian Revolution in 1804 took place in this region. Those include the first African slave rebellion in the *Bois Caïman* ceremony in 1789 and the last battle for Haiti's independence from France in *Vertières* in 1803. Northern Haiti is also home to Toussaint Louverture, the commander in chief of the first Haitian slave-led army and the precursor of Haiti's independence. The region also hosts the National History Park, one of Haiti's UNESCO World Heritage sites. It is an early 19th-century complex comprising the Palace of Sans Souci, the buildings at Ramiers and the Citadel La Ferrière serving as "universal symbols of liberty, being the first monuments to be built by Black slaves who have gained their freedom," according to the 1982 UNESCO World Heritage List. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, these historical monuments were

[13] This estimate is based on the last census that was conducted in Haiti in 2003 and some population projections from the Haitian Institute of Statistics and Informatics (IHSI) and the population data website, which contains an online atlas of populations and countries worldwide.

estimated to attract tens of thousands of tourists annually, contributing significantly to Haiti's Gross Domestic Product.

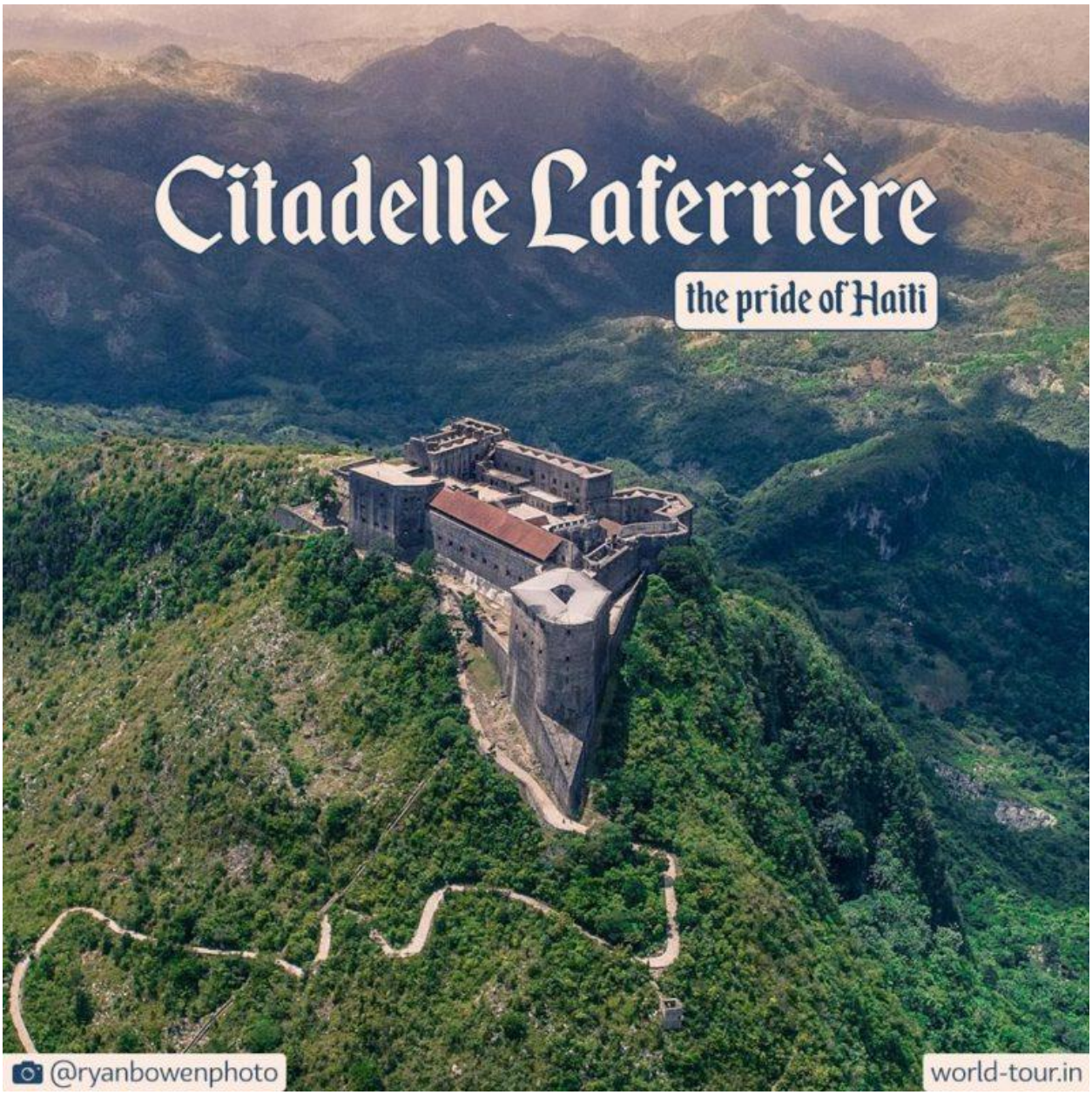
Regarding tourism, the northern region of Haiti is home to internationally renowned beaches, including Labadee, Cormier, Tortuga Island, and Amiga Island. Labadee is a private resort leased to Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd for the exclusive use of passengers until 2050[14]. Royal Caribbean has contributed the most significant tourist revenue to Haiti since 1986, employing 300 locals[15] and paying the Haitian government US$12 per tourist[16]. While Labadee serves as a port and resort for an international tourist population, mainly comprising Westerners, other beach areas such as Cormier, Amiga Island, locally known as *île-à-Rats*, and Tortuga Island are places where affluent segments of the Haitian people, foreign international aid workers in Haiti, and migrants from the Haitian diaspora go on vacation.

© Copyright Royal Caribbean
Tour: Photo of Labadee

[14] "The island and the outside world: being in Haiti without being in Haiti". Article published by the Economist on February 12th, 2009. Accessed on April 11th, 2023. Retrievable here: https://www.economist.com/news/2009/02/12/the-island-and-the-outside-world

[15] "Could this paradise really be poor, desperate Haiti?" Article written by Danna Harma for the Christian Science Monitor. Published on January 25, 2006. Accessed on April 10th, 2023. Retrievable here: https://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0125/p01s02-woam.html

[16] "Haiti's local community to benefit from additional fee from cruise passengers". Article written by Joseph Guyler Delva for the Haitian-Caribbean News Network. Published on August 18, 2014. Accessed on April 10th, 2023. Retrievable here: "Haiti's local community to benefit from additional fee from cruise passengers"



These historical and tourist sites make the region stand out as a must-see place for visitors. Northern Haiti is highly recommended to foreigners by Haitians in Haiti and its diaspora when it comes to visiting and/or understanding the history of Haiti. The historical monuments in Northern Haiti, such as the Sans Souci Palace and La Ferrière Citadel, as shown in the photos above and below, are often considered the country's immense pride. However, besides beautiful beach images and

prideful historical monuments, Northern Haiti, like the rest of the country, is shaped by significant socioeconomic inequalities that structure local populations' living conditions. Socioeconomic inequalities in contemporary Haiti are both a product of history and internal socio-political instability, contributing to the 'multidimensional vulnerability' (Audebert 2017) of living conditions in Northern Haiti.

© Copyright Cristina Schutt: Photo of Sans Souci Palace.
Photo retrieved on July 7th, 2023.

Historical Context and Social Inequality in Haiti

Haiti is a former slave colony that has struggled to establish itself in the world of nations after gaining independence from France in 1804. Following its independence, the first Black Republic faced "post-emancipation internal conflicts" (Bolland 1981:591) marked by the maintenance of racial hierarchy between three groups of Haitians, namely, a small group of former white colonizers, a

considerable group of freed people of colour (*affranchis* in French) and a vast majority of former Black African slaves. Also, the post-emancipation climate in Haiti was shaped by hierarchical economic status between owners and workers and unbalanced and threatening political relations with France. Immediately after its independence, Haiti was derailed into a long history of underdevelopment (Plummer 1984, 2012). In addition to unresolved internal conflicts, Haiti faced isolation from imperialist countries, including the United States, Britain, Spain, and France, which affected its recognition as a nation-state.

For instance, while France later recognized Haiti as an independent and sovereign country, it demanded that Haitians pay a hefty indemnity of a hundred-fifty million gold francs, estimated to be twenty-one billion US dollars in today's currency[17]. Because of this debt, economists estimate[18] that Haiti lost a hundred-fifteen billion dollars, which could have been injected into the country's economy to develop its education, healthcare, and agricultural systems as well as basic infrastructures, such as paved roads and highways, clean water, electricity, gas, internet, and telecommunication technologies, among others. This debt significantly affected Haiti as it struggled to develop its economy, determine its political system, and define its social agenda to improve the living conditions of Haitians after its independence. Also, Haiti struggled to prove to the world that its independence as the first Black Republic was not an impertinent rebellion against one of the most powerful military forces at that time but a fight for human equality.

Moreover, newly independent Haitians faced emerging vicissitudes imposed by the evolution of the world market economy, namely, the evolution from an agrarian to a capitalist system

[17] "How colonial-era debt helped shape Haiti's poverty and political unrest". Article written by Hyeyoon (Alyssa) Choi for ABC News. Published on June 24, 2021. Accessed on May 5th, 2023. Retrievable here: https://abcnews.go.com/US/colonial-era-debt-helped-shape-haitis-poverty-political/story?id=78851735#:~:text=The%20French%20recognized%20Haiti's%20independence,%2421%20billion%20(USD)%20today

[18] "The Rasom: Haiti's Lost Billions". Article written by Lazaro Gamio, Constant Méheut, Catherine Porter, Selam Gebrekidan, Allison McCann, and Matt Apuzzo for the New York Times. Published on May 20, 2022. Retrievable here: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/05/20/world/americas/enslaved-haiti-debt-timeline.html

(Wallerstein 1995). During this process, traditional commerce was made obsolete by improvements in transportation and communication. This change prompted the reinstatement of the mercantilist ideas that were thought to have died out, which was a significant component of the Market Revolution because of the Industrial Revolution. In those conditions, Haiti, the former slave-turned-independent country, faced the challenges of its post-emancipation climate and the newly established capitalist world economy.

In a capitalist world dominated by nineteenth-century racist ideologies (Fanon 1967; Banton 1987; Miles 1987; Balibar and Wallerstein 1991; Goldberg 2009; Satzewich 2021), Haiti faced colonial racism as a significant cause of its isolation and subsequent underdevelopment. In reaction to "the potential threat of a renewal of French interest in her old colony, the Haitian government was forced to isolate the country to protect it from foreign invasion" (Lacerte 1981:500). This resulted in Haiti's social and political implosion. Later, with "the expansion of global capitalism and the borderless flow of capital" (Meyer 2000:233), brutal changes resulting from an interplay of geopolitics and race have taken place in developing countries like Haiti, for they have become lucrative places for "multinationals to operate due to their cheap labour and very low taxation" (Standing 1999:584).

Additionally, Haiti was impacted by the global economic restructuring from the 1970s onward – like many other countries, Haiti was a poor country where multinational corporations relocated their factories because of its cheap labour – which has profoundly impacted international migration, leading to "massive flows of people from countries of the Global South to the Global North or within the Global South" (Castles 2004:210). Furthermore, the two U.S. occupations of Haiti from 1915 to 1934 (Cooper 1963), the violent Duvalier dictatorship from 1957 to 1986 (Laguerre 1989), the coup d'état orchestrated in 2004 against the Haitian President Jean Bertrand Aristide, the 2010 and 2021 earthquakes and numerous hurricanes have created long-term effects on Haitians' well-being through shortages of food and livelihood, destruction of homes and property, destruction of public institutions

such as schools, universities, hospitals and so on, contributing to the multidimensional vulnerability (Audebert 2017) of current living conditions in Haiti. And Northern Haiti is not exempt.

Socio-Structural Conditions in Contemporary Northern Haiti

Living conditions in contemporary Northern Haiti are structured by significant inequalities readily observable across the region. In the urban areas of major cities such as Cap Haitian, Fort-Liberté, Port-de-Paix, Milot, and Plaine du Nord, life is mainly organized around an informal economy, consisting of essential retailing products, such as non-perishable foodstuffs including rice, beans, corn, cooking oil, coffee, and sugar. These products are mainly imported from the Dominican Republic and Miami and sold in street markets. For the past few decades, these imports have helped fight inflation in Northern Haiti by considerably lowering the price of essential products. However, they have also negatively impacted the local production of beans, corn, bananas, coffee, roots, and tubers, which the region is known for. This has significantly affected the living conditions of rural populations. As a result, many Haitians in Northern Haiti have migrated from rural to urban areas, overcrowding the region's major cities.

The overpopulation in urban areas has led to a housing crisis in a precarious real-estate market where offers are scarce. Many newly arrived inhabitants who do not have a home end up living with relatives in overcrowded houses. Others opt to build unsafe dwellings on the periphery of urban areas easily destroyed by hurricanes, tropical storms, and resulting flooding. This overpopulation has also severely strained the already underdeveloped healthcare and education systems in Northern Haiti. Healthcare-wise, the region has only five hospitals for over two million inhabitants. Though some are funded by international aid, most hospitals are not well-equipped to care for the population. The medical staff working for these hospitals are not well-paid; if they are, there are significant delays in

processing their salaries. Parallelly, many medical doctors operate private clinics whose costs are often unaffordable for the general population.

The education system in Northern Haiti is severely underdeveloped, lacking school materials and equipment to function. The hundreds of schools across the region cover only elementary and primary education. Most students in rural areas face the decision to stop school altogether after completing their 5th grade or move to urban areas to pursue secondary education. Those who do not have the means to move to other towns and cities cannot easily reach their schools as public transportation is scarce, unreliable, and expensive in the region. Many schools also struggle to recruit instructors and staff. While the government publicly funds schools, employees must wait several months to receive their salaries. This situation often results in frequent strikes, affecting school programs and calendars.

© Copyright Carlo Handy Charles:
Public Transportation
in Northern Haiti
Photo taken during my fieldwork
in 2021.

The post-secondary education system is not exempted from this crisis. The region has only three public universities, with staff and instructors frequently going on strike for delayed payments or non-payment from the government. Most of the post-secondary sector comprises private institutions that are unaffordable to many students because of their high tuition fees. As a result, some students leave the region to study at the State University of Haiti in Port-au-Prince, the capital city of Haiti, or in some foreign institutions in the Dominican Republic. Wealthier students often are funded by their families to leave the country to pursue education overseas. Some bright but poor students sometimes win highly selective and competitive scholarships from foreign governments to attend universities in the Americas, the Caribbean, and Europe.

In addition to these structural problems, Northern Haiti has unreliable electricity and no clean water systems to serve the population. EDH, which stands for Electricity of Haiti, is a state company funded by the Government of Venezuela to provide electricity in the northern region. Due to corruption and mismanagement, there is rarely more than a few hours of electricity daily or weekly in most of the region. Most businesses and middle-class and upper-class households buy generators to solve this problem. In addition to the electricity issue, there is a gas crisis.

Since 2019, Haiti has faced a severe gas crisis, contributing to ongoing political instability. While the country has always had an electricity problem, Petrocaribe – a strategic alliance signed by nearby Venezuela in 2006 – has allowed Haiti to save money by borrowing fuel and deferring payment for up to twenty-five years. Haitian governments would then use the savings to develop the economy and fund social programs. Instead, at least two billion US dollars went missing, according to a senate audit in 2019[19], prompting massive violent protests and political repression nationwide and in the Haitian diaspora.

[19] "Why Venezuela Oil Program Is Fueling Massive Street Protests in Haiti". Article written by Ciara Nugent for the Time Magazine and published on June 24, 2019. Accessed on May 8th, 2023. Retrievable here: https://time.com/5609054/haiti-protests-petrocaribe/

© Copyright Carlo Handy Charles: Line up in a Gas Station in Cap Haitian because of the gas crisis in Haiti
Photo taken during my fieldwork in 2021.

The oil crisis has impacted the region's living costs as many small businesses, telecommunication companies, hospitals, clinics, schools, and transportation services depend on purchasing gas to operate their daily activities. Like in many countries, inflation affects the most vulnerable people in Northern Haiti, who constitute most of the population. This has increased

malnutrition[20] in a context already exacerbated by cholera outbreaks and the COVID-19 pandemic[21]. This socioeconomic and political crisis has severely deteriorated living conditions in Haiti, in which poverty is reported to have increased by 87% in 2021, meaning that Haitians relied on just over seven dollars per day to survive, according to the World Bank[22]. In other terms, more than 80% of Haitians live below the poverty line[23], including those in Northern Haiti.

Social Class Structure in Northern Haiti

The northern region has a lower-middle class and an elite whose socioeconomic statuses allow them to live differently[24] than the poor masses. Given visible poverty in Northern Haiti, the middle class and the elite are easily identified in public by their skin colour, material properties, and socioeconomic activities. Light-skin tone often serves as a marker between the elite and the masses. In contrast, the middle-class segment tends to be Black or mixed. Birth and socioeconomic control of the country rather than personal achievements often determine membership in the elite class. Whereas some modicum of upward socioeconomic mobility due to higher education and political connections to government officials determine membership in the middle class.

The elite and some middle-class members pull their income from controlling imports, primarily from the Dominican Republic, the United States, and to a lesser extent, France. In addition

[20] "UN: Children in Haiti hit by cholera as malnutrition rises". Article published on November 23, 2022 by CTVNews.Ca. Accessed on June 15th, 2023. Retrievable here: https://www.ctvnews.ca/world/un-children-in-haiti-hit-by-cholera-as-malnutrition-rises-1.6165091

[21] "Malnutrition in Northern Haiti under COVID-19: Our Perspective". Article published by Second Mile Haiti on May 12, 2020. Accessed on June 12th, 2023. Retrievable here: https://www.secondmilehaiti.org/blog/2020/5/12/malnutrition-in-northern-haiti-under-covid-19-our-perspective

[22]"The World Bank in Haiti". Article accessed on June 12th, 2023. Retrievable here: https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/haiti/overview#:~:text=In%20line%20with%20these%20results,greatest%20inequality%20in%20the%20region.

[23] "Haiti: Between poverty and natural disasters". Article published by CESVI. Retrievable here: https://www.cesvi.eu/approfondimenti/haiti-between-poverty-and-natural-disasters/

[24] For a deeper class analysis in Haiti, I recommend reading the article "Haiti's Social Structure" by George Eaton Simpson. Even though it was published in 1941, I find that it is the most descriptive article on social classes in Haiti. More importantly, it is not ideological.

to imports, these groups control key positions in most government institutions in Northern Haiti, such as ports, the airport, the planning department, the education ministry, the health ministry, as well as the *Direction Générale des Impôts* and the *Office National D'Assurrance Vieillesse,* Haiti's tax and pension agencies, where money is often embezzled to fund private entrepreneurial activities. Other lower middle-class members in Northern Haiti obtain their socioeconomic status via importing and retailing recycled furniture, house appliances, and clothing, as well as used cars that their families in the Haitian diaspora buy and send to them by boat.

© Copyright Carlo Handy Charles. Containers with migrants' imported goods. Photo taken during my fieldwork in 2021.

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These used products are locally known as *pèpè nan kontenè*, as shown in the photos above. The term *pèpè* is often used as a symbol of socioeconomic distinction in Northern Haiti. Accordingly, those who buy these used/recycled products – namely, most people in the region – are from the masses, whereas people from wealthier classes supposedly purchase everything new. In this sense, the sellers and buyers of *pèpè* do not have as high of a status as the wealthier classes in Haiti. However, the *pèpè* business provides insights into how the Haitian diaspora shapes class statuses in Northern Haiti. This, in turn, shapes how locals perceive diasporic individuals in Northern Haiti.

Religion

Beyond socioeconomic inequalities, religion significantly structures how people live in Northern Haiti. In an impoverished context where jobs and opportunities are scarce, religion – and, more importantly, religiosity – has become an essential factor that shapes people's lives. As a result, many people organize their week around religious activities, such as bible study, prayer meetings, Saturday or Sunday worship services, and evangelizations. While Roman Catholicism is reported as the main practicing religion in Haiti, significant other denominations, such as Protestantism, Adventism, and Jehovah's Witnesses, among others, compete for membership. These religions, in addition to voodoo, have a meaningful impact on the region as they often provide the population with a place to gather, socialize, and enjoy some festive moments of worship, which alleviate or make many people forget their harsh living conditions– albeit it is for two or three hours at the time.

In addition, some churches organize food and clothing donations to fulfill their solidarity and social responsibility missions. Their donations help many families in urgent need. However, these religions also shape local attitudes toward politics, work, prosperity, gender, and sexuality. From a socioeconomic and political standpoint, many of these religions' priests and pastors deliver dubious messages about the role of God in solving all problems one may face. For instance, some invite their members to pray to God to solve Haiti's ongoing political, oil, and criminal gang crises instead of encouraging the population to engage in concrete political action through voting, for instance. Others consistently deliver prosperity-focused messages, according to which God will make their members rich and prosperous if they attend church regularly and pay offerings and tithes. The money collected from poor members serves to enrich religious leaders. Some organize special prayer meetings for God to bless their members so they can obtain visas to move out of Haiti and contribute to the church's mission from the Haitian diaspora.

Postcolonial Homophobia

The abovementioned religions crystalize gender and sexual norms through heteronormative and anti-LGBTQ+ messages. Ecclesiastic messages shape not only people's attitudes toward gender and sexuality but also their reactions or responses to intimate relationships among gay men in Northern Haiti and their migrant partners from the Haitian diaspora. For instance, a group of gay Haitian migrants from the United States and Canada organized a week-long vacation in Northern Haiti in November 2021, causing a scandal in the region. During their visit, the Haitian migrants met with their local partners in well-known hotels and resorts in Cap Haitian – the capital city of Northern Haiti. They were also spotted on a boat departing from Cap Haitian to explore various touristic islands near the northern coast of Haiti. They were also seen in hotel pools and other facilities in Cap Haitian. Rumours circulated in the region that these men from the Haitian diaspora organized orgies with their local partners.

Soon after their departure, photos and videos circulated on TikTok and WhatsApp, revealing the identity of local men who accompanied the migrants during their vacation in Cap Haitian. Several Haitian men who have sex with men (MSM) were publicly outed, and other openly gay men were criticized for taking part in such 'perverse' sexual behaviours. People argued that local men are involved in intimate relationships with Haitian gay migrants because of their precarious socioeconomic status in Haiti and not necessarily because they may be gay. In the aftermath of this event, homosexuals have come under intense scrutiny and have faced a recrudescence of stigmatization and discrimination in Northern Haiti. In traditional media, on social media platforms and in everyday conversations among families, friends, and neighbours, migrants and homosexuals have become sensational objects of discussion because they are seemingly perverting 'morally acceptable' sexual behaviours and gender identities in Haiti.

As Haitian migrants ensure the socioeconomic survival of many nonmigrants in Haiti (Orozco and Burgess 2011; Cela et al. 2022), some people in Haiti perceive developing a successful intimate relationship with Haitian migrants as an enterprise that can lead to an immediate improvement of their socioeconomic status in Haiti and/or to their potential emigration projects from Haiti. Therefore, intimate transnational relationships between gay men in Haiti and those in the Haitian diaspora are perceived as a strategy that local men deploy to survive poverty in Haiti. While migrants' money may motivate some men to develop intimate relationships with migrants visiting Haiti, focusing on money as the sole reason these men are involved in these intimate transnational relationships obscures how homosexuality and transnational space intersectionally shape how gay migrants and nonmigrants develop connections and maintain ties across international borders.

Considering the historical and contemporary socio-structural conditions of life in Northern Haiti, my research contributes to understanding how homosexuality, transnational space, and homosexuality shape the characteristics, meanings, and goals of intimate relationships that gay men in Northern Haiti develop and maintain with migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora in the United States, Canada, France, Chile, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic.

© Copyright Carlo Handy Charles. One of the street markets in Northern Haiti.
Photo taken during my fieldwork in 2021.

CHAPTER III:
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I use a mixed-method qualitative research approach consisting of eleven months of ethnography and forty-four semi-structured interviews with men in Northern Haiti involved in same-sex intimate transnational relationships with migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora. A social constructionist grounded theory approach informs my mixed-method qualitative research design (Guba and Lincoln 1994; Glaser and Strauss 1967; Turner 2000; Luibhéid 2008; Creswell 2009; Charmaz 2014; Bischopping and Gazso 2016; Aurini et al. 2021). It allows for examining how homosexual identity and practices are a dimension of power that intersects with transnational space and socioeconomic inequality to shape the characteristics and meanings of the same-sex intimate cross-border relationships that men in Northern Haiti develop and sustain with their migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora in Canada, the United States, France, Brazil, Chile, and the Dominican Republic. This chapter discusses my access to the field, my philosophical assumptions, research design, and analytic strategies, as well as my role as a qualitative researcher and as an insider/outsider in the field.

ACCESSING THE FIELD

Accessing gay friendship networks in Northern Haiti, where homosexual identity and practices are taboo, was more difficult than I had anticipated while conceiving this research project. It took me two months after arriving in Northern Haiti to meet gay men who were out and willing to share their experiences dating migrants from the Haitian diaspora. As a researcher born and grew up in Cap Haitian before leaving my hometown to complete my post-secondary education and work in Venezuela, France, and Canada, I imagined that accessing the field would be a smooth-sailing experience. It turned out to be a challenge at first. To access the different gay networks of the region, I was lucky to meet Henry*[25] through a mutual friend in Cap Haitian, who then became my principal

[25] Henry is a pseudo I use to protect the privacy and anonymity of the informant.

informant in the field. Henry identifies as gay but is not out to his family. When we met, our mutual friend introduced us without revealing to Henry that I was in Haiti to research the interplay of transnational space, socioeconomic inequality, and homosexuality for my doctoral degree. In Northern Haiti, it is crucial to be careful while engaging in any discussion about homosexuality.

Because of this, I was not forthcoming with my friend about the actual research I was conducting in Northern Haiti. Before meeting Henry, I had vaguely told my friend I was in Northern Haiti to research the local population's perceptions of and relationships with the Haitian diaspora for my doctoral degree. When other local Haitians asked me about my research, I often said that I studied Haitian migrations to North America, the Caribbean, and Europe and their relationships with Haiti until I sensed that I could trust them to reveal my real research topic on Haitian transnational migration and homosexuality. Henry and I went out for drinks in a bar on Cap Haitian's Boulevard. He asked me why I returned to Northern Haiti and how long I planned to stay. I told him about my Ph.D. program in Canada and France and said I was in Northern Haiti to stay for a few months for my research on 'the perception of the Haitian diaspora by local people in Northern Haiti.' After discussing for a while, we finished our drinks and exchanged phone numbers. Upon leaving the bar, Henry told me he would happily help me with whatever I might need for my research. I thanked him and accepted his offer of help. I returned to the place where I was staying, feeling conflicted because, once again, I could not tell the complete truth about my research.

Another week passed; I met others who asked me similar questions about my research. Each time, I could not get myself to share with them that I was in Northern Haiti to study Haitian transnationalism and homosexuality. I did not feel comfortable sharing my real research subject with even my brother, who is a lawyer and understands how academic research works. I was apprehensive of how he would react. I was not ready to respond to homophobic remarks from my family. Quite frankly, I did not know how I should respond many times. As a result, I did not tell my parents what

I was working on for my doctoral research. Sometimes, I was in the car with my family, and they would make some remarks about people they perceived as gay, which made me uncomfortable. Most of the time, I chose not to react to my family's remarks because I knew that they were common in Northern Haiti and that my family was not exempt from using them as they were part of the available homophobic repertoire of the region. However, they still bothered me because, deep down, I felt that their homophobic comments could also be directed toward me.

While I was conducting my fieldwork, I was out to only two of my five siblings. My parents and three other siblings were unaware of my bisexuality. As I dated women in the past and could pass as straight, I did not immediately 'come across as gay' – that is often what I heard from people to whom I chose to reveal my sexual orientation. Even in Toronto, Paris, and Martinique, where I live and study and where homosexuality is less stigmatized and discriminated against, people are often surprised when I reveal that I am bisexual. Their reaction suggests that my straight-passing appearance is incompatible with my sexuality. My straight-passing appearance made it even more challenging to access gay networks for my fieldwork in Northern Haiti. I was sometimes perceived as a potential date or intimate partner because I looked and acted 'masculine' – whatever the term meant to them. In other situations, I was perceived as a straight man who could not relate to gay men's issues. Meeting Henry eased my access to the field after I revealed my real research topic to him. At first, he was surprised that a 'straight man' like me would be interested in the issue of homosexuality in Haiti. However, after I came out to him as bisexual and told him that I was conducting the project for my doctoral degree, he agreed to connect me with his gay friendship networks so that I could conduct my ethnographic observations and interviews.

Henry became very involved in my research project. He took his role as an informant very seriously. He often expressed that he was pleased that a Haitian *dyaspora* like me decided to come to Northern Haiti from Canada to conduct a research project on homosexuality. He mentioned that most

research projects on homosexuality are conducted in Port-au-Prince, the capital city of Haiti, which often leaves out the experience of gay men from outside the Haitian Capital. I knew his opinion about the lack of research on homosexuality outside Port-au-Prince was factual because I had completed my literature review for this project at that point. Also, he was very happy that I had decided to focus my research on the intimate cross-border relationships that men who have sex with men sustain with migrants from the Haitian diaspora. According to him, these relationships are problematic in Haiti. He explained how some of his friends were deceived or abused by Haitian gay migrants, whom he sees as 'bad people.' He told me once that it was about time that someone was finally interested in seriously examining them.

Henry's passion for my research was refreshing and helped me through some challenging times in Northern Haiti. However, because of his friends' experiences with some 'bad Haitian migrants,' he sometimes tended to generalize his opinion to all Haitian migrant-nonmigrant relationships. Sometimes, this provoked some tensions between us, as my role as a researcher is not to take sides but to consider all aspects of these relationships and not just the bad experiences that some gay nonmigrants in Northern Haiti faced in their relationships with Haitian gay migrants. Nonetheless, we always solved our different understandings, and I moved on to complete the fieldwork. Thanks to Henry, I built a trusted rapport with research participants. Like Henry, many gay men in Northern Haiti eagerly shared their experience navigating intimate relationships with gay Haitian migrant partners. Therefore, conducting ethnographic observations and interviews became an enjoyable research experience.

PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS

A constructionist approach to qualitative research informs my philosophical assumptions, which aim to expand the current ontology and epistemology of knowledge on Black men's social identities and same-sex intimate cross-border practices in the fields of transnational migration and

sexualities. A constructionist approach to qualitative research conceives the nature of knowledge as multiple. Knowledge here consists of constructions subject to continuous revision. Social constructionism aims to "understand and reconstruct the constructions that participants (including the researcher) initially hold, aiming toward consensus but still open to new interpretations as information and sophistication improve" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:113).

Furthermore, social constructionism focuses on how individuals seek to understand the world where they live and work. They develop suggestive meanings of their experiences – meanings directed toward particular objects or things. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views (Creswell 2009) rather than narrowing down the meanings into a few categories or ideas. As Lincoln and Guba assert, these meanings are 'negotiated socially and historically' (Lincoln and Guba 1994). They are formed via interactions with others through historical and cultural norms that operate in individual lives. The researcher intends to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world (Charmaz 2014).

Applying this constructionist approach to this thesis, I consider homosexuality as a dimension of power that shapes migrants' and nonmigrants' sense of identity, behaviour, sexual practices, and life outcomes in a specific socio-historical, economic, and political context (Foucault 1978, 1991; Rubin 1981; Manalansan 2006; Luibhéid 2008; Cantú et al. 2009; Carrillo 2017). As such, this thesis examines the figure of the migrant and nonmigrant as agents central to the development and maintenance of cross-border relationships across a specific transnational social space (Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Faist 2000; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002; Satzewich and Wong 2006; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Audebert 2022;). Doing so allows me to examine how men in Northern Haiti understand and construct the meanings of their same-sex intimate transnational relationships through interactions with their migrant partners who reside across the Haitian diaspora in the United States, Canada, France, Brazil, Chile, and the Dominican Republic while keeping in mind that they are shaped

by local perceptions of the Haitian diaspora, men's experiences of homosexuality, and socioeconomic inequality in Northern Haiti's socio-historical, cultural, economic, and political context.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis uses a grounded theory approach. As Kathy Charmaz and Robert Thornberg (2021) put it, the defining purpose of grounded theory – which also sets it apart from other qualitative methods – is that it constructs a theory that offers an abstract understanding of the phenomenon under study. In other words, grounded theory is not only interested in describing the properties of a social phenomenon and how it occurs (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Charmaz and Belgrave 2012). It also interprets why a social phenomenon happens to "raise the level of conceptualization of the data" under examination and "increase the theoretical reach" of the data analysis (Charmaz 2012:4).

To achieve grounded theory's goals of description and theorization, I used eleven months of ethnographic fieldwork and forty-four semi-structured interviews. I use ethnographic field notes to provide background information and contextualize the interview data. I use semi-structured interviews to examine how men in Northern Haiti perceive, develop, and sustain same-sex intimate transnational relationships with migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora in the sociocultural, economic, and political context of their lives in Northern Haiti. As a qualitative research method, grounded theory allows me to observe through ethnography and analyze through interview data how nonmigrants negotiate their homosexuality and socioeconomic inequality in Northern Haiti while navigating through the Haitian transnational social space to connect and develop same-sex intimate relationships with migrants across the Haitian diaspora in the Caribbean, the Americas, and Europe. I use a constructionist grounded-theory method to examine how nonmigrants make sense of their same-sex intimate transnational relationships with Haitian migrants and what they mean to them, their families, and their community in Northern Haiti.

Ethnography

I conducted eleven months of ethnography from November 2020 to October 2021 among men in Northern Haiti involved in same-sex intimate transnational relationships with migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora. While many countries, including Canada and France, imposed social distancing measures to restrict people's movements and control the COVID-19 pandemic, life in Haiti was as usual. This meant that people continued operating their daily activities with or without masks. As the death toll was much lower in Haiti[26] compared to other countries, schools, concert venues, sporting events, restaurants, hospitals, and churches remained open during regular hours while they were closed or restricted in many other countries around the globe.

Given Haiti's 'normal' living conditions at the heart of the COVID-19 pandemic, I spent eleven months conducting ethnography to capture how perceptions of the Haitian diaspora, socioeconomic inequality, and experiences of homosexuality in Northern Haiti shape same-sex intimate transnational relationships among men in Haiti and their migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora. I carried out extensive observation during cultural events, national festivities, and private activities and celebrations in five neighbourhoods of Northern Haiti.

Given that homosexuality is both a taboo and an object of discrimination and stigmatization in Northern Haiti, I selected these neighbourhoods because I was invited by research participants who belong to gay networks whose *Baz/Katèl* (base) and activities take place in these locations. Regular visits to these five ethnographic sites allowed me to spend significant informal time with two families and two friendship networks and to recruit research participants for my interviews.

[26] "One of the World's Poorest Countries Has One Of The World's Lowest COVID Death Rates". Article written by Jason Baubien for the National Public Radio (NPR). Published on May 4, 2021. Accessed on June 6th, 2023. Retrievable here: https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2021/05/04/992544022/one-of-the-worlds-poorest-countries-has-one-of-the-worlds-lowest-covid-death-rat

Micro-level Observations

The first family comprises two sisters and one brother who identifies as gay but is on the down low (DL), i.e., he was not out; he was closeted. The three siblings are thirty-five years old, thirty years old, and twenty-nine years old. They were raised by their mother, the family's breadwinner, until she passed away three years before I met them. The three siblings share a modest two-bedroom flat in Cap Haitian with a six-year-old child. None of them have a stable job. They mainly survive thanks to their intimate partners – one of whom is a Haitian migrant in Montreal – who send them remittances regularly. The other family comprises a husband, a wife, a two-year-old son and a one-year-old daughter. The husband identifies as straight but has sustained a three-year-long intimate transnational relationship with his wedding's best man, who financially supports him and his family. The two friendship networks comprise, respectively, five and seven friends who all identify as gay. They are involved in intimate cross-border relationships with gay migrant partners who live across the Haitian diaspora while maintaining parallel intimate relationships with their respective boyfriends in Haiti.

Some informal ethnographic visits consisted of *chita bay blag*. This means hanging out in family houses to discuss topical issues of the day. Others included buying and eating street food as a group or attending birthday parties in private residences. During these informal times, friends shared the latest gossip of the day, such as which gay men in the city had just started a new relationship with a migrant, who had just broken up with whom, which relationships worked or were on the verge of a breakup, who was cheating on who, whose gay men's lives have changed for the better or worse as a result of being in these transnational relationships, and which migrant was ungenerous with his money to his partner. They also discussed different strategies to hide these relationships from their family, neighbours, and the larger community of Northern Haiti. Sometimes, some of these strategies worked. Other times, their families, friends, and neighbours discovered they were gay and involved in intimate relationships with *Dyaspora* (Haitian migrants).

© Copyright Carlo Handy Charles. One of the neighborhoods in Cap Haitian where I conducted my fieldwork. Photo taken in 2021.

The *chita bay blag* sessions allowed them to re-strategize as a group and determine how to respond to specific situations, especially in the face of discrimination due to their gender and sexual orientation. Occasionally, these sessions became heated when one friend made a pass to another friend's intimate partner or boyfriend or if they suspected that their partner was cheating on them with someone they knew, such as a close friend who may belong to the same network. While these sessions provided them with an opportunity to gather and chat about their collective conditions as gay men in Northern Haiti's context, they could also be spaces of tension and mistrust because of the threat of losing one's boyfriend to someone close. As I discuss in chapter five on the meanings of gay migrant remittances in these intimate transnational relationships, losing a migrant boyfriend can be costly to some gay men in Northern Haiti. Therefore, they navigated these friendship networks cautiously while finding comfort and happiness in hanging out with their gay friends.

© Copyright Carlo Handy Charles: Photo of a neighborhood where I conducted my fieldwork in Northern Haiti in 2021.

Meso-level Observations

In addition to these families and friendship networks, I regularly visited three LGBTQ+ institutions operating locally in Northern Haiti. Two of the organizations work to prevent the transmission of HIV-AIDS in Haiti. They regularly organize training and information sessions about how people can contract HIV and how to protect themselves. They hire *pair éducateurs,* who are young gay men, to reach out to and share HIV-related information and tests with different gay networks in the region. Some of their activities consist of distributing condoms so that gay men can protect themselves. Also, they share information about pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and transgender issues during their meetings with the gay community.

The third LGBTQ+ organization is mainly dedicated to providing a safe space for gay men in Northern Haiti to gather and celebrate their gender and sexuality. It organizes frequent activities for the LGBTQ+ community, in which meals and drinks are offered for free. These activities often end in parties where members of the LGBTQ+ community dance as a group while enjoying some of the most popular Haitian music of the moment. Most of the time, spending time at this organization felt like a relief against the harsh living conditions that Haitians, especially Black gay men, experience daily.

Macro-societal Observations

I conducted observations in hotel lobbies, bar restaurants, beaches, and historical and tourist sites where Haitian migrants often spend time with family, friends, and/or local intimate partners while visiting Haiti. In those places, I was mainly interested in observing how Haitian migrants acted when they returned to visit the northern region and how the local population perceived them and interacted with them. One of the main places where Haitian migrants generally gather when they visit the region is the Boulevard of Cap Haitian. The Boulevard is a two-kilometre road with a large sidewalk

connecting the Cap Haitian city centre to the West coast of Rival, where the historical Picolet Fort – a popular historical and tourist site – and a public beach are located.

The Boulevard is the entertainment district of Cap Haitian, where the most important and famous bars and restaurants, such as *Lakay, Gwòg, Cap Déli, Boukanye, Barik, Deco,* etc., are located. Because of their locations near Cap Haitian Bay, they are the favourite places for the local population and Haitian migrants to go for one or two drinks alone or with friends and family during the day or at night. These bar-restaurants are also where major Haitian artists and musical groups perform when they come to the northern region. These bar restaurants are also venues where cultural events are regularly organized, including beauty pageants, slam/poetry sessions, music and painting competitions, and fashion runway shows.

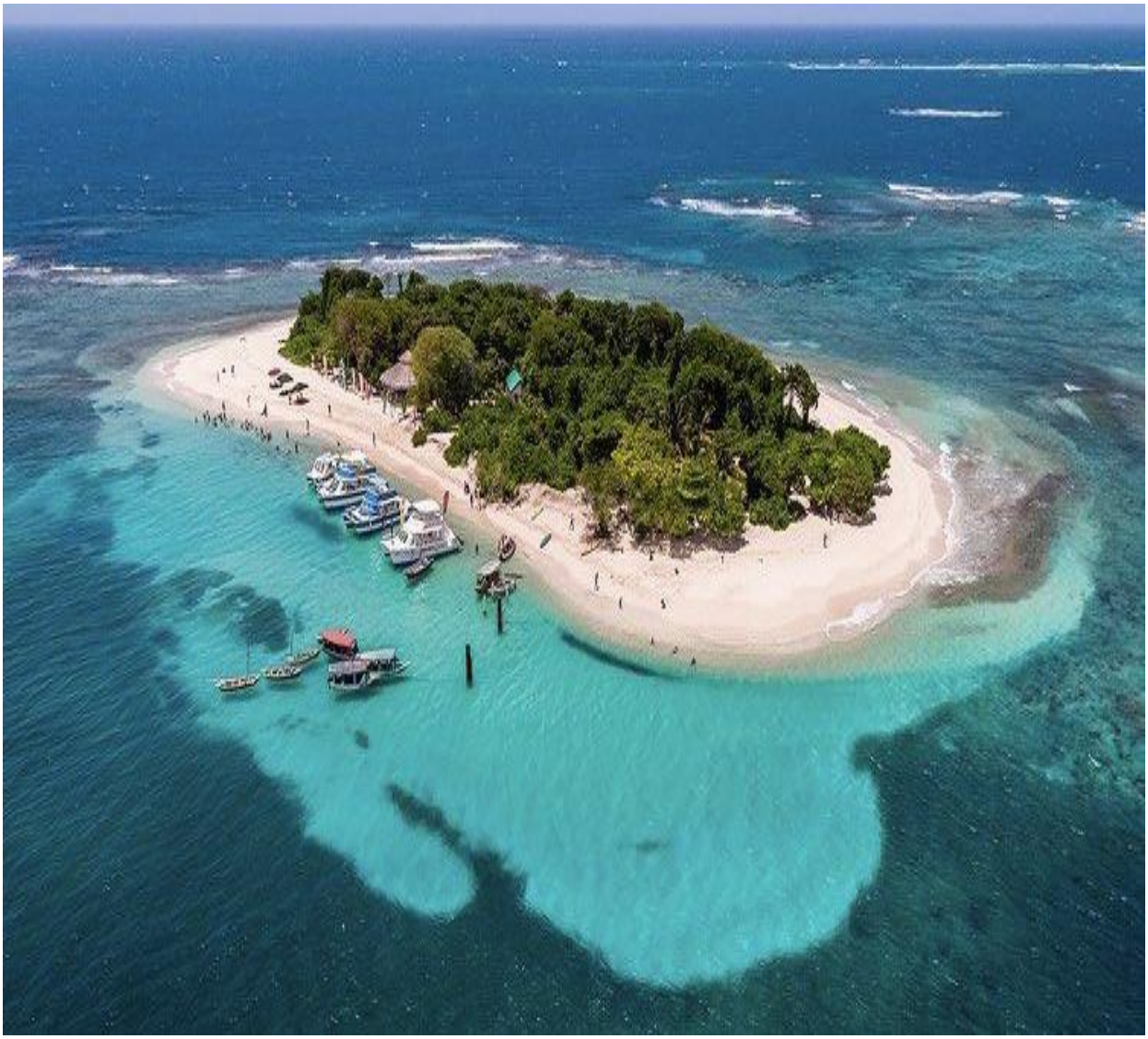
© Copyright: Hotel Satama, where Haitian migrants often spend their vacation in Northern Haiti.
Photo retrieved on July 7th, 2023.

Owned and run by Cap Haitian's *Mulato* (mixed-race Black/White) elite, these bar restaurants offer relative comfort to the city's petite bourgeoisie, who enjoy moments of peace, good music, and food amid the chaos and visible poverty plaguing the city. As places owned by the elite, the bar-restaurants are always operational regardless of whatever socioeconomic and political crisis the country goes through at a specific time. For instance, these venues always seemed to find gas to operate their activities while the rest of the population lined up for hours under a thirty-plus-Celsius-degree sun in gas stations to buy gas – if they were lucky to find some. Because of their relative comfort, these bar restaurants are very popular with migrants visiting Haiti. They are often places where Haitian migrants take their nonmigrant family members to dinner or attend cultural events. They are also where Haitian gay migrants go on dates with their nonmigrant partners in Haiti.

While migrants select these bar restaurants in Cap-Haitian to take their nonmigrant partners on dates, these places are not less stigmatizing or more tolerant of gay relationships. These places are simply the best and often the only ones in Cap Haitian, where there is electricity to play some music and have a fan on while eating under the unforgiving Caribbean sun. Most of the time, when gay migrants and nonmigrants went on dates in these places, they behaved like they were two straight friends enjoying a good meal and some drinks together. They refrained from showing signs of affection so as not to attract people's curious looks or gossip about them. Cap Haitian is more conservative than Port-au-Prince, the capital city of Haiti, where there were gay bars and other venues where LGBTQ+ people gathered. In light of this, migrants and nonmigrants tried to be careful in how they behaved in public, regardless of whether they were in these *Mulato*-owned restaurants or other tourist areas across the northern region of Haiti.

For example, a typical migrant's visit to Northern Haiti includes a tour of historical and tourist monuments, such as La Citadelle La Ferrière, Sans Souci Palace, Fort Liberté, Vertières, etc.; a one or two-day beach trip to Île-à-rats, Labadee, and Cormier; some down time at the hotel facilities, mainly

pools and lobby at high-end hotels, etc. in Cap Haitian where the migrant sojourns; and some *chita bay blag* (hanging out in people's house or front yards) and *Sòti* (going out) time at the bar restaurants on the Boulevard. Therefore, these places were critical ethnographic sites for me to observe how resource inequality between migrants and nonmigrants shaped how the local population perceived Haitian migrants and the power dynamics that structured migrants-nonmigrants' relationships.



© Copyright Royal Tour Labadee: Île-à-rats Island, where Haitian migrants often go on vacation while visiting Northern Haiti. Photo retrieved on July 7th, 2023.

Interviews

Upon receiving ethics clearance from the McMaster University Research Ethics Board, I conducted forty-four semi-structured interviews with men who have sex with men in Cap Haitian, Limonade, Vertières, Vaudreuil, and Fort-Liberté. These are cities and towns located in Northern Haiti. I recruited my research participants using snowball sampling and direct contact through gay friendship networks. To cross-sectionally expand the recruitment of participants along the lines of educational background, class, gender, and neighbourhood of residence, I used the help of local LGBTQ+ organizations in Northern Haiti. To participate in the research, I asked potential participants during our first contact to confirm that they identified as *masisi* in Haitian Creole or simply men who have sex with men (MSM) and that they have been or are involved in romantic and/or intimate cross-border relationships with Haitian migrants who reside anywhere across the Haitian diaspora.

As discussed in the introduction and chapter two, the term *masisi* means gay in English and *homosexuel* in French. The term homosexual is the direct English translation of *homosexual* and does not have the same negative connotations in Haiti as it does in North America. In Haiti, the term *masisi* or *homosexuel* encompasses any gender identity and sexual behaviour denoting non-heterosexuality, such as bisexual, transgender, transsexual, pansexual, or straight men who have sex with men. As the term gay is considered a Western identity in Haiti and the term *masisi* is pejoratively used to stigmatize male homosexual Haitians, the latter term – men who have sex with men (MSM) – allowed me to include different categories of men in Haiti who may not socially identify as gay but engage in homosexual behaviours or practices with other men.

The essential factor I considered to include potential participants in this research was that they had to self-identify as men who have sex with men or *masisi* because my analytical focus was and is on how same-sex practices that form the homosexual identity in Haiti shape transnational connections

and intimate relationships among Haitian men in Northern Haiti and the Haitian diaspora. As such, rather than focusing on how each research participant defines their own sexual identity, I centre my analysis on the actual same-sex behaviours and practices men in Northern Haiti engage in that ground their intimate transnational relationships with their migrant partners from the Haitian diaspora.

Doing so allows me to account for how my research participants described the homosexual practices that shape their intimate transnational relationships with migrants in Northern Haiti's socio-historical, cultural, and political context. In this sense, my research prioritizes an emic versus an etic perspective (Mostowlanki and Rota 2020). An emic perspective gives voice to research participants' standpoints. In other words, I use the terms homosexual and gay to capture how men who have sex with men – who may identify as *masisi* (gay), *homosexuel* (homosexual), *hétérosexuel* (straight), bisexual, pansexual, or transgender – used them during my fieldwork to refer to their same-sex practices. An etic perspective in this thesis would have otherwise used my perspective as the researcher, grounded in pre-existing social science categories or my experience as a bisexual man living in Canada and France, to refer to my research participants.

Other selection criteria were that participants must be 18+ years old and reside in Haiti's northern region to be included in the research. To account for the variety of intimate cross-border relationships in my sample, I limited the minimum length of the intimate relationships under study to three months. This means that research participants needed to have been involved in a cross-border relationship with Haitian migrants for at least three months to qualify for this study. I decided on this criterion to avoid recruiting participants who were involved in one-night-stand sexual practices or some forms of prostitution with tourists during their visits to Haiti, which are not the focus of my analysis here. Doing so allowed me only to include men who had been involved in same-sex intimate transnational relationships with Haitian migrants for at least three months during the interviews.

As such, it is worth reiterating that migrants' economic remittances, i.e., migrants' money transfers to their nonmigrant partners in Northern Haiti, were not among my selection criteria. This means that I did not ask potential participants whether they got involved in these relationships with the intention or hope of getting money from migrant partners to include them in my research. This would have been an inaccurate representation of my research sample as some nonmigrants sent money from Northern Haiti to their migrant partners in Chile, for instance. I discuss this case in chapter six.

In this research, I am interested in examining how homosexuality, transnational space, and socioeconomic inequality shape same-sex intimate cross-border relationships among Haitian migrants and nonmigrants in the context of Northern Haiti. This means that money was not a primary or secondary criterion for me while considering whether a nonmigrant fitted my definition of a same-sex intimate transnational relationship, which, as I discussed in chapter one, included any intimate relationship – short-term or long-term – Haitian nonmigrants developed and sustained with Haitian migrants across borders. Money transfers from migrants to their nonmigrant partners in Northern Haiti became one of my main findings, which I discuss in chapter five.

The reason I limited the short-term relationships to a minimum of three months was that my main research goal was to examine how these intimate same-sex relationships were developed and sustained transnationally as the migrant resided in the Haitian diaspora and the nonmigrant partner in Northern Haiti. Therefore, my research focus was not on examining sex work or sex tourism among men in Northern Haiti who have sex with other men from the Haitian diaspora exclusively for money. Although I believe this can be a fascinating future research project, my intellectual curiosity and scholarly interests during my fieldwork were focused on migrant-nonmigrant transnationalism in the context of homosexuality and socioeconomic inequality in the post-colonial, homophobic, impoverished context of Northern Haiti.

Informed Consent

At the beginning of each interview, I discussed the consent form with the research participants to ensure they understood the project's purpose. If participants understood and agreed to participate, I asked them to sign the consent form by reiterating when they could withdraw from the study. I also informed them that they did not need to respond to all the questions if some made them uncomfortable, and we also had the option to stop the interview. Furthermore, I informed them that the interview they voluntarily gave me would remain anonymous so that no one would know that they had participated in the study and that the only people who would be aware of the content they shared with me were the members of my doctoral supervisory committee in Canada and France.

Participants agreed to share their perspectives and experiences with me only after guaranteeing that I would respect their privacy and anonymize the data. When we agreed on the terms and conditions to participate in the research, we set a time and place to conduct the interview. As my fieldwork occurred at the heart of the COVID-19 pandemic, I observed social distancing measures to ensure my participants' health and safety as well as mine. I used an audio-recording device to record the face-to-face interviews. My ethics application for this research details the process to secure and protect the anonymity of the interviews.

Interview Structure

Each interview lasted thirty minutes to over an hour, allowing participants ample time to account for their perspectives and experiences of intimate transnational relationships with Haitian migrants. I conducted all the interviews in Haitian Creole, the primary language spoken in Haiti, to ensure that all participants could understand my questions and share their perspectives and experiences in their native language. I used the same semi-structured interview guide for all participants in the research. Although I did not ask the questions in the same order for each

participant, all the interviews followed a narrative arc structured around these themes: 1) Homosexual transnational spaces and crossborder connections, 2) Transnational relationships and meanings, and 3) Homosexual transnational spaces and life projects.

The first theme explored how men in Northern Haiti contacted migrants across the Haitian diaspora to develop same-sex intimate transnational relationships with them. Some of the questions I asked participants included: How did you and your partner connect with each other? How did you consider starting a romantic/intimate relationship with them? How long did it take for you to develop your relationship with them? The second theme examined how gay men in Northern Haiti navigate intimate transnational relationships with migrant partners and what they mean to them, their families, and the community locally. Questions I asked research participants included: How would you describe your experience dating/being involved in a relationship with your migrant partner? How do you and your partner support each other in your long-distance relationship? Do you or your partner ever send money to support each other? If so, how much? And what do you use the money for? If not, why? Have you ever talked about economic support with your partner? Does your relationship with your migrant partner affect your life in Haiti? If so, how? If not, why? Have you and your partner visited each other during your relationship? How does the long distance affect your relationship?

The final theme explored questions regarding the future of their same-sex intimate transnational relationships. I asked research participants the following question: how do you see the future of your relationship with your partner? Depending on their responses, I probed with other questions, such as would you consider joining your partner where he lives? If so, when would you do that? If not, why? And have you talked about the possibility of joining your partner? Or would your partner return to Haiti to live with you? How do you and your partner discuss these plans for your future together?

The interviews allow me to account for nonmigrants' perceptions, perspectives and experiences negotiating their sexuality and socioeconomic inequality in Northern Haiti while navigating same-sex intimate transnational relationships with migrant partners who reside in various countries across the Haitian diaspora. In addition to my ethnographic field notes, interviews were the best-suited method for this research. As Janice D. Aurini, Melanie Heath, and Stephanie Howells (2016) put it, interviews afford the researcher "the flexibility to craft questions that can be reworked or expanded as the project develops" (Aurini et al. 2016:80). More importantly, interviews allowed me to delve into participants' sense-making, which was essential to understand how they made sense of their same-sex intimate transnational relationships in the Haitian context of poverty and stigmatization and discrimination against LGBTQ+ people in Northern Haiti.

Socio-demographic Characteristics of Research Participants

All research participants (*N = 44*) identified as men who have sex with men (MSM). This means that all have engaged in some form of same-sex practice with other men, even though they may not identify as gay or *masisi* in Haitian Creole. However, as discussed in the introduction and chapter two, the term *masisi* is used in Haiti to describe same-sex social identity and intimate practices. This means that in Haiti, from the moment a man is known to engage in same-sex practices with other men, he is perceived as *masisi*. Nonetheless, research participants used different labels to define their gender identity and sexual orientation regardless of their same-sex intimate practices. Among them, fifteen identified as gay, fifteen as bisexual, four as transgender or *fanm* in Haitian Creole, three as straight, and one as pansexual. Four participants did not use labels to define their gender and sexual orientation. They perceive themselves as men who happen to have sex with other men. The age group of my participants ranges from 18 to 47 years old. Thirty were between 18 and 29 years of age, ten were between 30 and 39, and four were between 40 and 47.

Thirty-seven participants came from and belonged to poor social classes in Haiti, and seven participants came from the lower middle class. I determined their social class backgrounds and status based on where they went to school and their family's socioeconomic status and neighbourhood of residence. Thirty-seven participants lived in shantytowns on the periphery of Cap Haitian. Seven lived in middle-class neighbourhoods in Cap Haitian. Sixteen held a high school diploma but did not pursue post-secondary education due to their lack of economic resources or desire/project to do so. Twelve completed some university education and received an undergraduate degree. Eight completed one or two-year technical study at the college level. Five did not complete high school. Three have never been to school.

As mentioned above, their migrant partners resided in six countries across the Haitian diaspora: the United States, Canada, France, Brazil, Chile, and the Dominican Republic during the interviews. The following is a breakdown of where their migrant partners lived. Thirty-four migrant partners resided in the United States. Among them, fourteen in New York, twelve in Florida, four in Boston, two in New Jersey, and two in California. Three resided in Santiago, and one in Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. Three resided in Montreal, Canada. Two resided in Paris, France. And one in Santiago, Chile, and one in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

It is worth mentioning that I did not select research participants based on where their migrant partners lived in the Haitian diaspora. Instead, I selected nonmigrants in Northern Haiti because they were or had been involved in same-sex intimate transnational relationships with overseas Haitian partners. As such, my research purpose is not to analyze the experience of Haitian migrants based on their lives in their host countries across the Haitian diaspora but to examine how Haitian nonmigrants experience same-sex intimate transnational relationships with Haitian migrant partners in their daily lives in Northern Haiti.

RESEARCH ANALYSIS

After completing my fieldwork in Northern Haiti, I transcribed and translated the forty-four interviews from Haitian Creole to English. I used the service of a translator to verify the accuracy of my translation. Using the qualitative software NVivo R, I coded the interview data into several themes, adding to the codes I had taken during my ethnographic fieldwork. I used a social constructionist approach to code my data in inductive and deductive themes (Creswell and Creswell 2017; Carrillo 2017; Aurini et al. 2021). The inductive themes emerged while coding my ethnographic field notes and interview data, and the deductive themes were derived from my literature review and conceptual frameworks.

I used a narrative approach (Bischopping and Gazso 2016), informed by social constructionism, to analyze my interview data in conjunction with my ethnographic field notes. This allowed me to contextualize research participants' perspectives and experiences of same-sex intimate transnational relationships with Haitian migrants in the socio-structural conditions of their lives in Northern Haiti. My field notes allowed me to account for the manifest and latent content of the interview data (Berg 2001). I used the grounded theory method to raise the conceptualization level and increase my data's theoretical reach (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Charmaz 2012; Charmaz and Thornberg 2021). Lastly, I analyzed my positionality as an insider and outsider during my field research in a section on reflexivity.

Coding

Using the insights of qualitative research methodologies (Berg 2001; Bischopping and Gazso 2016; Aurini et al. 2021), I coded my ethnographic field notes and interview data into two deductive and two inductive themes. My deductive themes are 1) Transnational and 2) Homosexual identity and practices. My inductive themes are 1) Characteristics and 2) Meanings of Haitian Homosexual Transnationalism. I used a constructionist grounded-theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Cantú

2009; Carrillo 2017; Charmaz 2012) to code the manifest and latent content of my ethnographic observations and interview data.

Deductive themes

1. Transnational

My first deductive theme derives from the literature on transnationalism, in which scholars use the term 'transnational' to describe the connections, ties, activities, and relationships that co-ethnic/co-national migrants and nonmigrants develop and sustain across the borders of the nation-states where they live and work (Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Portes et al. 1999; Goldring 1998; Faist 2000; Levitt 2001; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Satzewich and Wong 2006; Carling 2008; Audebert 2022). Building on this literature, I use the deductive theme of 'transnational' to analyze the characteristics or properties of intimate cross-border relationships involving Haitian gay men in Northern Haiti and the Haitian diaspora. In other words, I use the theme of transnational to capture what makes these cross-border relationships among gay Haitian migrants and nonmigrants transnational.

Under this theme, I found six characteristics or properties that I use to describe the transnational relationships between gay migrants and nonmigrants: a) simultaneity, b) transnational social space, c) use of communication and travel technologies, d) length of ties and intensity of activities; e) remittances, and f) socioeconomic inequality and power dynamics. I discussed these characteristics or properties of migrant-nonmigrant transnationalism in my theorization of the Homosexual Transnational Space concept in chapter two. It is worth pointing out that while I examine how nonmigrants perceive Haitian gay migrants' involvement in Haiti through the intimate cross-border relationships they sustain with gay partners in Northern Haiti, the simultaneity of gay migrants' transnational lives, ties, and activities can be studied in various other ways, such as their involvement in social mobilization for human rights for gay men in Haiti or their activism on social media to change

the perception of gay men in Haiti and across Haitian diasporic communities, among others. This is not the focus of this current research.

2. Homosexual identity and practices

I deducted the theme of homosexual identity and practices from the literature on sexualities and queer migration, which posits that sexuality is a power dimension that affects all aspects of migration processes and LGBTQ+ migrants' lives (Rubin 1981; Foucault 1991; Manalansan 2006; Luibhéid 2008; Cantú 2009; Carrillo 2017; Tamagawa 2020; Murray 2020). As a powerful desire grounded in same-sex practices, homosexuality drives migration and shapes migrant integration processes. As a social identity, homosexuality shapes many countries' immigration policies and refugee laws (Murray 2020), public attitudes toward marriage, family, and child adoption (Rubin 1981; Adamczyk 2017), and the micro-individual experience – acceptance, integration, stigmatization, discrimination, and/or ostracization – of LGBTQ+ people (Icard 1986; Green 2007; Durban 2022). Building on this understanding of homosexuality, this thesis focuses on how homosexuality – same-sex social identity and intimate practices – shapes intimate relationships Haitian migrants and nonmigrants develop and sustain transnationally.

By 'intimate,' I do not necessarily mean penetrative sex. Intimacy can take many forms and shapes. Understandably, because of the long-distance format of these relationships, penetrative sex is not always possible as an intimate homosexual practice for these couples. Thus, they find creative ways to keep their intimate relationships alive. Research participants revealed during interviews that they expressed intimacy with their partners in various ways, including long phone calls where they discuss their romantic feelings, video chats in which they keep each other company during the day, and sharing intimate photos on WhatsApp. Therefore, my analytical focus here is on the varied intimate homosexual practices that bind Haitian male migrants and nonmigrants in cross-border relationships, not just penetrative same-sex practices.

From this standpoint, I coded my ethnographic and interview data to focus on how the intimate practice and social experience of homosexuality among male migrants and nonmigrants shapes their transnational relationships in Northern Haiti. Indeed, Haitian migrants residing in the United States, Canada, France, Brazil, Chile, and the Dominican Republic develop and sustain intimate cross-border relationships with nonmigrants in Haiti based on the same morality and financial obligations that characterize relationships in transnational families and kinship groups in Haiti.

According to Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton (1995) and Glick Schiller and Fouron (2001), Haitian migrants feel obligated to care for their family and friends upon leaving Haiti because of poverty and lack of basic resources. Otherwise, local populations in Haiti would likely die of poverty and misery. While this is true for most Haitian migrants, I find that homosexuality, as a dimension of power, differently shapes the dynamics of these transnational relationships than those sustained by heterosexual couples and families. Homosexuality adds a layer of complication to transnationalism among Haitian migrants and nonmigrants.

Indeed, the social perception and experience of homosexuality as taboo, a curse, and an object of stigmatization and discrimination in Haiti and its diaspora lead migrants and nonmigrants alike to maintain these relationships hidden from their families and communities in both Haiti and the diaspora. At the same time, as I analyze in chapters four and five, the experience of homosexuality as a stigmatized social identity in Haitian society/diasporic communities and same-sex intimate practices drive gay men across the Haitian transnational social space to connect, develop, and sustain intimate cross-border relationships. Therefore, in the following chapters, I examine how Haitian men's experiences of homosexuality in Haitian society and diasporic communities and their intimate homosexual practices shape how they develop and sustain transnational relationships and what they mean to them in Northern Haiti.

Inductive themes

Two inductive themes emerged as I coded my ethnographic field notes and interview data: 1) the characteristics and 2) the meanings of the intimate transnational relationships that Haitian gay men develop and sustain across international borders.

1. Characteristics of Gay Transnational Relationships

The first theme, 'characteristics,' allows me to examine and describe the properties that set apart Haitian gay migrants and nonmigrants' transnational ties and relationships from those developed by heterosexual Haitian migrants and nonmigrants. My goal here is not to compare Haitian straight and same-sex transnational relationships strictly. Instead, this first theme allows me to describe how Haitian men develop same-sex intimate relationships across the Haitian transnational social space. Doing so facilitates depicting the types and lengths of these transnational relationships and the virtual and physical spaces that connect men in Northern Haiti to those in the Haitian diaspora.

a) Types of Intimate Transnational Relationships

Same-sex intimate transnational relationships among Haitian migrants and nonmigrants can be divided into romantic and sexual. Romantic relationships are committed, serious, and long-term. In these romantically oriented relationships, migrant and nonmigrant partners discuss potential projects for their future together in Haiti or the migrant's country of residence in the Haitian diaspora. The sex-focused transnational relationships are somewhat casual. They are experienced as sex friendships or sex work while migrants are on vacation in Haiti or through video chats while migrants are abroad.

b) Length of gay intimate transnational relationships

The length of intimate transnational relationships among Haitian migrants and nonmigrants varies from three months to eleven years. The long-term relationships are not as temporary or punctual as those formed because of sex tourism or sex work between rich Westerners and poor locals in the Caribbean (Kempadoo 1999, 2004, 2018; Kempadoo and Doezema 2018). The short-term

relationships are rather sexual and developed before or when migrants come to Haiti. They end shortly after migrants leave Haiti to return to their host countries. Long-term relationships are rather romantic. They are developed in various ways. However, they are sustained over time when both partners have romantic feelings for each other and have common interests, activities, and goals in Haiti. For instance, a Haitian migrant may have a business that the nonmigrant partner takes care of while the migrant is abroad. In many cases, the long-term relationships last because migrants have fallen in love with their nonmigrant partners in Haiti and support them, although nonmigrants may no longer have romantic feelings for them.

c) Meeting spaces: Homosexual Transnational Spaces

Facebook, Grindr, and WhatsApp are virtual spaces where Haitian migrants and nonmigrants connect to develop same-sex intimate transnational relationships. Private residences, beaches, hotels, bars, and restaurants in Northern Haiti are the physical places where they meet to sustain their same-sex intimate transnational relationships. As I argue in chapter four of this thesis, these spaces are Homosexual Transnational Spaces. I define a *Homosexual Transnational Space* as a transnational social space imbued with homosexual meanings, which shape local perceptions of diasporas, the development of same-sex transnational connections and intimate relationships among Haitian men across international borders. I use chapter four to discuss and illustrate how Haitian homosexual transnational spaces – virtual and physical – allow Haitian migrants and nonmigrants to connect and develop their same-sex intimate cross-border relationships.

2. The meanings of homosexual intimate transnational relationships

This second inductive theme allows me to capture the meanings of the same-sex intimate transnational relationships that nonmigrants in Northern Haiti develop and sustain with migrants in various diasporic communities across the Haitian transnational social space. Four meanings emerged from my

ethnographic field notes and interview data: a) mutual benefits, b) transnational refuge, c) homosexual transnational social space, and d) inequality.

a. Mutual Benefits

As analyzed in the following chapters, nonmigrants in Haiti benefit from financial support, mentorship, guidance, and migration sponsorship from their migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora. The different kinds of remittances they receive from their migrant partners help them take care of themselves, their families, kinship, and friendship networks in the impoverished context of Northern Haiti. In contrast, as nonmigrants reported during interviews, migrants seem to benefit from the emotional support and cultural self-actualizations they gather from their nonmigrant partners in Haiti while living abroad. Through these transnational relationships, their nonmigrant partners in Haiti seem to provide them with emotional support to navigate sexual racism or racial discrimination in their host country's mainstream gay community (Icard 1986; Green 2007) and economic insecurity (Glick-Shiller et al. 1995). In addition, as I observed in the field, by sustaining these relationships, migrants seemingly ensure they have an available intimate partner to have casual sex with or accompany them during their vacation trips to Haiti.

b. A transnational refuge

Nonmigrants in Northern Haiti experience their same-sex intimate transnational relationships as a transnational refuge against economic precarity and poverty or ostracization from their families and the local community based on postcolonial homophobia in Haiti. As discussed in chapter five, Haitian migrants, as perceived by their nonmigrant partners, seem to experience these intimate cross-border relationships as a transnational refuge against sexual racism in their host country's gay community, homophobia in Haitian diasporic communities, and racism in their host societies.

c. Space: The meaning of homosexual transnational social space for Haitian men

The notion of homosexual transnational space can be understood as physical distance and cultural proximity. This perception of Haitian homosexual transnational space is fundamental to sustaining intimate cross-border relationships involving men in Haiti and the Haitian diaspora. On the one hand, Haitian migrants are often married and must seemingly hide their same-sex intimate relationships from the heteronormative family life they carry in the Haitian diaspora. In other words, they are closeted gay men who are married to women and have children in their host country. In this sense, the Haitian transnational social space as physical distance apparently allows them to develop and maintain same-sex intimate relationships with other men in Northern Haiti while remaining married to their wives in their host societies.

On the other hand, as nonmigrants narrated, Haitian migrants who are not married to women and who are openly gay in the Haitian diaspora seem to be looking for intimate romantic partners in Northern Haiti, whom they do not seem to find in their host society – due to racism, hookup culture, different ways of engaging in romantic relationships, and so on (Icard 1986; Green 2007; Carrillo 2017) – to build their life and future with. From this perspective, the Haitian transnational social space as cultural proximity seems to enable them to look for partners in Haiti who may share similar values, experiences, and desire to build a life together as Black Haitians.

Conversely, nonmigrants seek same-sex intimate transnational relationships with their migrant partners as they often receive economic remittances to support themselves, their local boyfriends, and their family and friends in Northern Haiti. They view these relationships as a way to get money from a partner who does not live in the same place. Hence, there is less of a burden to share a life or have migrants interfere in their sexual and romantic lives in Northern Haiti. Therefore, the Haitian homosexual transnational social space experienced as physical distance benefits gay nonmigrants in Northern Haiti.

Those who perceive Haitian migrants as romantic partners to build a life seek same-sex intimate transnational relationships with migrants even though they complain about the long-distance aspect of their relationships. They would prefer spending more time with their migrant partners in Northern Haiti or the Dominican Republic, for instance, to build stronger romantic relationships. Therefore, the Haitian homosexual transnational social space, experienced as cultural proximity, is a suitable means for men in Northern Haiti to find the type of life partners they want to date but do not seem available locally.

d. Inequality

As pointed out by migration scholars (Goldring 1998; Faist 2000; Levitt 2001; Pessar and Malher 2003; Satzewich and Wong 2006; Carling 2008; Vu and Satzewich 2022), significant inequality and power dynamics shape migrant-nonmigrant relationships. The same observation can be applied to Haitian migrants and nonmigrants' same-sex intimate transnational relationships. I use the inductive theme of inequality to code the different forms of power dynamics that structure Haitian migrants and nonmigrants' relationships. As I analyze in chapters five and six, while migrants' remittances are central to sustaining these relationships over time, they sometimes put some nonmigrants in Northern Haiti in situations of inequality vis-à-vis their migrant partners. Some nonmigrants in Haiti express disillusion, exploitation, deception, and betrayal resulting from their intimate transnational relationships with Haitian migrants. They experience these relationships as sites of tensions and contradictions, leaving them ambivalent toward their migrant partners and the Haitian diaspora as a whole. These tensions also affect their relationships' longevity and future projects with their migrant partners.

For instance, based on their experience in their host society, nonmigrants share during interviews that some migrants sometimes advise younger partners in Northern Haiti on the importance of education to get a good job. Such a view is sometimes at odds with the reality of Haiti,

in which highly educated people are often jobless. Nonmigrants tend to resent migrants for being disconnected from the reality of Haiti, whereas migrants feel that nonmigrants do not make enough effort to succeed in their lives in Northern Haiti. Other examples include false promises from migrants. Sometimes, nonmigrants report that their migrant partners may tell them they will sponsor them to immigrate to their country of residence – whether the U.S., Canada, France, etc. – and they do not fulfil their promises. The same situation applies to migrants who sometimes promise to send economic remittances to their nonmigrant partners, who never receive them. These are only a few examples of how inequality and power dynamics shape these same-sex intimate transnational relationships among migrants and nonmigrants.

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

I acknowledge at once that a humanist, social constructionist perspective informs the narrative approach to my data analysis (Guba and Lincoln 1994; Bischopping and Gazso 2016). A humanist social constructionist approach to narrative analysis conceives the nature of knowledge as a reconstruction of constructions, meaning that the researcher reconstructs participants' constructions of knowledge on a phenomenon shaped by a specific socio-historical, cultural, economic, and political context. In this thesis, I approach my narrative analysis as a reconstruction of the meanings that nonmigrants involved in same-sex intimate transnational relationships attribute to their experiences and those of their migrant partners in the context of Northern Haiti. As Kathy Bischopping and Amber Gazso (2016) stress: "If we think of narratives as constructed in the present but eddying into the future and back into the past, then we have many choices for how analysis of talk data can proceed. Each of these is profoundly humanist in its orientation, valuing the individual's search for meaning and capacity to re-evaluate the past, rather than seeing these as impediments" (Bischopping and Gazo 2016:56).

My humanist standpoint is also grounded in a queer approach to sexual migration (Manalansan 2006; Luibhéid 2008; Cantú 2009; Carrillo 2017), which understands homosexuality as shaping LGBTQ+ migrants and nonmigrants' lives. Such an approach is particularly important to study how homosexuality is a dimension of power that intersects with transnational space and socioeconomic inequality to structure intimate cross-border relationships among men in Haiti and the Haitian diaspora. My valuing of Haitian nonmigrants' search for meaning during the ethnography and interviews is critical for this study, as little research has been conducted on the same-sex intimate transnational relationships that men sustain across international borders.

As I understand "narrative as an active site of subject construction" (Kimura 2008:5), a constructionist paradigm anchored in queer humanism allows me as a researcher to take seriously research participants' attempts to make sense of their own experiences and access a greater understanding of their selves and their migrant partners as human and social beings. My data analysis follows a narrative arch, which examines how these same-sex intimate relationships start, what they mean to those nonmigrants in Northern Haiti, and how they are sustained across space and time.

MY ROLE AS A QUALITATIVE RESEARCHER

In this thesis, I assume the vision of narrative as a joint construction of meaning (Mishler *in* Analyzing talk, Bischopping and Gazso 2016:43). In this approach, I am interested in analyzing the way in which the researcher and research participants' subjectivities come into play during the "process of co-constituting knowledge and sense-making of meaning" (Lippke and Tanggaard 2014:136). Here, I assume that the researcher and participants come to the interview with different identities, interests, and intentions. Although both agreed on sharing and collecting data about experiences of same-sex intimate transnational relationships, it does not mean that the researcher and participants are absolutely foreseeing the unfolding of the narrative.

Hence, narrating the experience of intimate homosexual transnational relationships is a site where meanings are constituted and knowledge is produced. However, the "tenuous nature of the production of knowledge" (Nairn et al. 2005:221), actively shaped by both the researcher's and participants' subjectivities, can allow or inhibit the co-constitution of knowledge and the making sense of the experience of same-sex intimate transnational relationships. Thus, it is crucial to strategically analyze narrative as a joint construction of meaning by also "assessing whether a researcher has become an invested co-teller of a story, offering specific feedback, and showing an appreciation of the story's implications. Second, by assessing how well the researcher enacted their complex role, according to concrete lists of dos and don'ts" (Bischopping and Gazso, 2016:56).

REFLEXIVITY: PERCEIVED INSIDER STATUS

In the methodological literature on qualitative research, some scholars argue that being an insider generally increases a researcher's capacity to contact participants and access local information (Bourgois 2003; Bucerius 2013; Contreras 2015). Others contend that being an insider can lead to role conflict (Brannick and Coghlan 2007) and role confusion (Asselin 2003). In this section, I reflect on the distinction between insider and perceived insider status based on my research experience for this thesis. Accordingly, a perceived insider is a researcher perceived by the scholarly community as sharing the same sociocultural/demographic characteristics as their research participants. Some of these characteristics include the same language, 'racial' and ethnic identity, gender, sexual orientation, and/or class, often perceived as helping the researcher get easier access to their fieldwork, recruit participants, conduct interviews and/or participant observation.

While this was generally true for me, I argue that I was a 'perceived' insider because of the unique issues I faced while doing my fieldwork in Haiti. Instead of distinguishing who is an insider and an outsider, I assert that my experience as a Black bisexual Haitian migrant conducting research in my home country made the boundary between my supposed insider and outsider status porous.

Therefore, I refer to my status as a perceived insider because of the following issues, which profoundly shaped my fieldwork experience and perspectives of academic research outside of the Global North:

a. Socio-linguistic differences:

Most of my participants only spoke Haitian Creole, whereas I generally speak French and/or English daily. While I also speak Haitian Creole fluently, I mostly speak it with my family and a few friends. This posed interesting questions about how our differences in meaning, symbolism, and life experience based on the languages we speak shape our interactions. More importantly, speaking Haitian Creole was fundamental to building rapport with my research participants, as we could understand and communicate in a common language. Our socio-linguistic differences became evident as many research participants used certain words and expressions that were derived from French but did not have the same meaning for us. As a doctoral student in France and a former French teacher, it was sometimes awkward to understand what my research participants meant when using certain French words or expressions. Therefore, probing several times helped me clarify what they really meant.

b. Socioeconomic status:

During my fieldwork, I was perceived as a 'wealthy migrant' from the Haitian diaspora. Such a perception did not and could not account for my actual experience as an international student on a temporary status in Canada, which was set to expire while in Northern Haiti for my fieldwork. Whilst people perceived me as rich, I was in immense psychological distress because of the imminent expiry date of my migration status in Canada and because it would be difficult to travel back to the country to renew my immigration papers amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, I had to remain unbothered by such perceptions to conduct my research properly.

The different socioeconomic statuses between my research participants and me, along with my twelve years of migration experience in four countries and seven years of studying different aspects

of migration for my master's and doctorate, shaped how I talked about migration versus how locals did. Instead of grasping the reality of migration and integration processes for Black (and often poor and sometimes uneducated) Haitians, locals perceived migration as a straightforward journey to a host country, which would lead them to be in a situation where they could instantly make money to send back to Haiti. Sometimes, I had to face my own internal conflict and remind myself of not correcting some participants' understanding of migration while interviewing them.

c. Differing experiences of queer identity:

I lived in Toronto and sojourned in Martinique and Paris as an openly queer/bisexual man. However, I had to hide my queer/bisexual identity in Northern Haiti for my safety and that of my family so that I could conduct my research. This posed a significant internal conflict as I had just come out as a queer man after a long, excruciating closeted life right before starting my fieldwork in Haiti. Therefore, being back in Haiti for my fieldwork made me relive the traumatic experience of the closet. Given that we were at the heart of the pandemic at the end of 2020 and early 2021 and that vaccines were not yet available, I could not easily make plans to return to Canada because of public health measures, such as paying a high bill to quarantine in a government-designated hotel upon return to Canada as an unvaccinated traveller.

In addition, my isolation in Canada as an international student and my determination to complete my fieldwork despite Haiti's socioeconomic, environmental, and political instability made staying there my best option. The unintended consequence of that decision is that I had to relive the trauma of closeted gay life in a place where my sexual identity threatened my quality of life and interactions with others. While this allowed me to understand better the lived experience of my research participants in Haiti, I had to urgently undergo therapy to make sense of my traumatic experience upon returning to Toronto.

d. Religious upbringing versus non-religious adult life:

Being raised in a very religious family where we went to church four times a week before leaving Haiti, it was challenging for me to return to Cap Haitian as I am no longer religious. In Northern Haiti, many aspects of religion shape people's daily lives. People use religion to justify almost anything. Sometimes, people would use religious beliefs to attack LGBTQ+ people by telling them that natural disasters occur in Haiti because God punishes them. As a result, the rest of the country gets punished as well. Religious beliefs often substitute scientifically proven knowledge about the world.

Many scientific facts that people take for granted in Canada and France, where I reside, are constantly questioned in Haiti because of religion. For instance, some people use religious beliefs to justify the lack of development in Haiti, stating that the country is not 'developed' because there are too many sinners or because people do not go to church or apply biblical messages to their lives. Returning to such a religious place was challenging for my fieldwork experience, especially because I understand that French colonization, American Christianity, and various kinds of foreign inference in Haiti have influenced how people think about religion.

e. Different understandings of time:

While I had to adhere to tight (and sometimes stressful) Canadian and French deadlines to complete my cotutelle doctoral program requirements, I faced the socioeconomic and political reality of time, shaped by (constant) instability, uncertainty, unpredictability, and inconsistency in Haiti. For instance, my first interview was delayed for two hours as the participant assumed that 2 p.m. meant 4 p.m. in Haitian understanding of time. Obviously, not all participants were that late. However, I had to reschedule several interviews to face the socioeconomic and political reality of time during my eleven months of fieldwork in Haiti, which was shaped by significant events such as the assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse, a magnitude 7.2 earthquake, shortages of food, gas, electricity, medicines, clean water, a cholera outbreak, as well as insecurity due to criminal gang crises.

These issues invite reflection on what it means to conduct research in poor areas in and outside the Global North, where sociopolitical and economic contexts shape life differently than in academic settings. Also, they call for reflection on what it means to decolonize academic research and to include experiences that are not typically White and Western. Finally, they encourage reflecting on the lack of psychological/mental health training and the limited practice of self-care in Academia for researchers conducting challenging research projects along the lines of race, gender, sexual orientation, poverty, crime, 'deviance,' and so on.

© Copyright: Haitian Times. A Haitian migrant celebrating the Haitian Kompa Music Festival in Miami. Photo Retrieved on July 7th, 2023.

CHAPTER IV:

HOMOSEXUAL TRANSNATIONAL SPACE AND CROSS-BORDER CONNECTIONS

In this chapter, I will theoretically examine how homosexuality intersects with the Haitian transnational social space and economic inequality to shape how nonmigrants in Northern Haiti perceive, connect, and develop same-sex intimate cross-border relationships with migrants from the Haitian diaspora. Furthermore, I use my ethnographic field notes and interview data to empirically describe the characteristics and types of homosexual transnational spaces men use in Northern Haiti's socio-cultural, economic, and political contexts to meet men from the Haitian diaspora. The substantive finding I will discuss in this chapter is that homosexuality is a dimension of power that organizes and shapes cross-border connections among Haitian migrants and nonmigrants through the Haitian homosexual transnational space. As this chapter will show, conceptualizing the Haitian homosexual transnational space as a space of connection for Haitian migrants and nonmigrants has significant implications for research on diaspora, transnationalism, and sexualities.

Haitian Homosexual Transnational Space

I define the Haitian homosexual transnational space as a transnational social space (Glick Schiller and Fouron 1999, 2001; Satzewich and Wong 2006; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Audebert 2022; Faist 2000, 2022) imbued with homosexual meanings (Icard 1986; Green 2007; Cantú 2009; Carrillo 2017), which shape how Haitian nonmigrants in Northern Haiti perceive Haitian migrants, develop transnational connections and same-sex intimate relationships that span the national borders of Haiti and various countries of the Haitian diaspora. Homosexual meanings here are understood as being grounded in Haitian men's experiences of same-sex intimate practices and social identity across the Haitian transnational social space. In other words, I analyze the homosexual meanings Haitian men attribute to the Haitian social transnational space as being informed by 1) their everyday experience

of homosexuality as taboo or a stigmatized social identity and 2) their same-sex intimate practices in Northern Haiti and across the Haitian diaspora.

While Haitian men's same-sex intimate practices are unequivocal, their gender and sexual orientation can take many forms and shapes, including bisexual, pansexual, men who have sex men, transgender or straight. Again, here, I focus my analysis on how men in Northern Haiti experience homosexuality as a stigmatized social identity and how their same-sex intimate practices shape their transnational relationships with migrants across the Haitian homosexual transnational space, which is both physical and virtual. Physical spaces are cities and towns in Northern Haiti and the Dominican Republic, where Haitian nonmigrants meet their migrant partners when they visit the Caribbean. Virtual spaces are gay dating applications, such as Grindr, and social media and messaging apps, such as Facebook and WhatsApp groups, where Haitian migrants and nonmigrants connect and sustain their same-sex intimate transnational relationships.

Furthermore, I contend that the Haitian homosexual transnational space is structured by significant socioeconomic inequality (Goldring 1998; Levitt 2001; Carling 2008; Tilly 2008) that regulates how nonmigrants and migrants perceive and connect with each other. In the following sections, I will show how Haitian nonmigrants' perceptions of Haitian migrants in Northern Haiti's socioeconomic and political context motivate them to navigate the Haitian homosexual transnational space to develop transnational connections and same-sex intimate relationships with them.

Homosexual Meanings across the Haitian Transnational Space

In Haiti and Haitian diasporic communities, homosexual identity and practices are socially constructed as taboo (Joseph 2018), a curse provoked by evil voodoo spirits (Louis 2017), or a product imported from Western countries (Durban 2022). Like in other countries where political homophobia prevails (Currier 2010; Murray 2012; McKay and Angotti 2016; Adamczyk 2017), this discourse locates

homosexuality outside the 'real' and 'imagined borders' (Anderson 2006; Nagel 2003) of Haiti and its diasporic communities (Boucard 2006; Colin 2020). As such, homosexual identity and practices are perceived as physically and socio-culturally distant from the Haitian transnational social space. This affects how Haitians develop and sustain same-sex intimate relationships across borders.

Building on Peggy Levitt and Nadya B. Jaworsky's definition, the Haitian transnational social space is understood here as a "multi-layered and multi-sited space" (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007:131) that includes Haiti and the various host countries of the Haitian diaspora, and that connects Haitian migrants and nonmigrants. Intimate connections across the Haitian transnational social space are made possible through shared cultural geography (Di Meo 2008; Claval 2012). Cultural geography here refers to how the Haitian transnational social space is imbued with "cultural meanings," shaping the relationships that Haitians develop among themselves, the networks they belong to, the movements they create, and the goods and information they exchange (Claval 2012:180). In this sense, the perception of homosexual identity and practices as belonging outside the real and imagined borders of Haiti is a piece of information or cultural norm that Haitians exchange across their transnational social space.

As other scholars have shown, the Haitian transnational social space is enacted by the flow of people, money, goods, products, and social-cultural-political ideas and norms that structure the lives of co-ethnic/co-national migrants and nonmigrants across international borders (Glick Schiller and Fouron 1999; Béchacq 2019; Zéphirin 2019; Cénat et al. 2020; Audebert 2012, 2022; Audebert and Joseph 2022). From this perspective, by placing homosexuality outside the real and imagined borders of the Haitian transnational social space, Haitian men's same-sex identity and practices are stigmatized, discriminated against, and excluded from Haiti and its diaspora as norms that do not belong to the 'Haitian culture.'

It is worth mentioning that lesbianism – same-sex identity and practices among women – is not as harshly discriminated against as male homosexuality in Northern Haiti. Many Haitian straight individuals would give a pass to lesbianism while they remain critical of male homosexuality. As a result, I found that Haitian men use their homosexuality as a stigmatized social identity and taboo same-sex practices to connect and remain in solidarity with each other across the Haitian transnational social space. Many of my research participants shared this viewpoint during my fieldwork in Northern Haiti. For instance, a forty-year-old bisexual research participant illustrates how the cultural meaning of homosexuality across the Haitian transnational social space fosters cross-border connections among Haitian men who have sex with men: "Some *dyaspora* [migrants] are conscientious. They have succeeded in their careers overseas and want to be with a gay man in Haiti to help them. As the saying goes *pie bèf pou pie bèf, yo ap pran kay Pratik*." This means they prefer helping gay men in Haiti by being involved in intimate transnational relationships with them instead of being with foreigners.

By saying that *pie bèf pou pie bèf, yo ap pran kay Pratik*, he is pointing to the fact that migrants in the Haitian diaspora have the option to pursue same-sex intimate relationships with men in their countries of residence. However, they choose to develop these relationships with men in Northern Haiti. In this sense, this participant emphasizes how the shared experience of homosexuality across the Haitian transnational social space motivates migrants who practice same-sex intimacy and have succeeded in their careers and lives in the Haitian diaspora to connect with and help fellow men in Northern Haiti by being involved in same-sex intimate relationships with them.

A thirty-one-year-old gay research participant who had returned to Northern Haiti during the pandemic after residing in the Bahamas for five years told me that he only dated gay men in Northern Haiti when he was overseas. When I asked him why, he responded that Haitian gay men share the same experience of homosexuality in Haitian culture, so they understand each other better. While his experience in the Bahamas may have been shaped by the ethnic construction and social isolation of

Haitians there, his position on dating only Haitian gay men is interesting. He gave me examples of how he and his boyfriend, who grew up in Cap Haitian, used to hide from their families and neighbours to express their sexuality. He told me that he used to wait until late at night to visit his boyfriend when everyone in their households was asleep. They used to laugh about fooling everyone by pretending they were 'just friends.' He said that this kind of experience is the reason why he prefers Haitian gay men because he feels more connected to them.

During my fieldwork in Northern Haiti, I frequently observed how gay men had to devise creative excuses to justify their 'close friendship' with other gay men. In the conservative region of Northern Haiti, where religion structures people's lives significantly, many gay men who regularly attend church do not feel they can tell their family, friends, and neighbours that their 'close friends' are indeed their romantic or sexual partners. They often must invent stories about how they met and became 'so close' to each other. When their migrant partners visit them in Haiti, they must concoct alternative sorties about them.

For instance, a twenty-nine-year-old gay research participant, who was in a two-year cross-border relationship with a Haitian migrant in Canada, felt forced to lie to his family, pretending that his partner was his old classmate from high school who returned to Haiti to visit his family. As old-time 'close friends,' it was justified that he often spent the night with his 'friend' in his hotel room after hanging out with him in bar restaurants, hotel pools, beaches, and tourist sites across the region. While spending the night with a migrant friend who returned to visit his home country is not widespread in Northern Haiti, he avoided their further inquisition into his same-sex intimate relationship with his migrant friend by framing it as a close, old-time friendship.

As my research participants put it, their homosexual identity and practices are fundamental aspects of their personhood, connecting them to men across the Haitian transnational social space. The meanings attributed to their homosexual identity and practices are circulated in the transnational

social space that connects Haitian migrants and nonmigrants through cultural geography (Di Meo 2008; Claval 2012). As Thomas Faist argues, "transnational social space refers not only to physical features but also to larger opportunity structures, the social life and the subjective images, values, and meanings that the specific and limited place represents to migrants" (Faist 2013:452). In many Haitians' imagination, Haiti is represented as a bounded and fixed culture, which Haitians share with each other across the transnational social space in which their lives are embedded.

Intersecting this view of transnational social space with homosexuality (Icard 1986; Luibhéid 2004; Green 2007; Cantú 2009; Carrillo 2017), I argue that the Haitian transnational space imbued with homosexual meanings produces a sense of sociocultural proximity among men in Haiti and the Haitian diaspora, despite living in distant geographic places. Hence, the Haitian homosexual transnational space is perceived by men who practice same-sex intimacy in Northern Haiti as connecting them to fellow Haitian men abroad because they share a common socio-cultural experience of homosexuality in the homeland and across Haitian diasporic communities.

From this perspective, the notion of transnational social space – also understood as physical distance and socio-cultural proximity – is central to understanding how Haitian nonmigrants connect and navigate same-sex intimate transnational relationships with Haitian migrants and whether, how, and why these relationships are maintained over time. In the following sections, I will examine how the socioeconomic inequality inherent to the transnational social space shapes how nonmigrants in Northern Haiti perceive and connect with Haitian migrants to develop same-sex intimate cross-border relationships.

Perceptions of Haitian Migrants as Desirable Same-sex Intimate Partners

In December 2020, I was in a Bar Restaurant on Cap Haitian's Boulevard – the city's entertainment district – when I overheard a group of friends discussing their relationships with *dyasporas* [Haitian migrants]. A young man said the following to his friends with whom he was having

drinks: "Oh My God! It is already December, and I have not met a *dyaspora* yet. What is happening to me? I must go to church to pray to God to meet a *dyaspora* before the year ends." Everybody laughed when he said he would go to church to pray to God to meet a migrant intimate partner. One of his friends said he should indeed attend church as soon as possible because the year was almost ending. Again, the group laughed and continued with the rest of their conversation, mainly focusing on their perception of Haitian migrants as desirable intimate partners in Northern Haiti.

As a Haitian migrant who had left Haiti twelve years before returning there for eleven months for my fieldwork in 2020, I was intrigued by the young man's matter-of-fact statement about his need to meet a Haitian migrant partner as soon as possible. At that point, I had been back in Haiti only one month and had not started conducting interviews for my doctoral research yet. Therefore, I did not understand how cross-border relationships men in Northern Haiti developed with migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora shaped their local perceptions of migrants as desirable intimate partners. However, this statement stuck with me throughout the remaining ten months I spent in Northern Haiti conducting my fieldwork. When I returned home that night, I wrote notes about what I had just heard in my field notebook.

I wondered why it was so urgent for this young man to meet a Haitian migrant before the year ended. Why did this group of friends seem to agree that the young man needed to find a Haitian migrant partner as soon as possible? Why would they refer to Haitian migrants as desirable intimate partners they needed to have in their lives? Where would he meet his future migrant partner? Why would he prefer someone in Haiti over a migrant partner he had never met and would probably not meet soon in real life? How would they develop their relationship? What would be the modalities of such a relationship across national borders? And how long would it last? These questions fueled my eagerness to start conducting interviews with men in Northern Haiti to find answers as soon as possible. During my fieldwork, I uncovered that homosexual identity and practices have the power to

organize and shape cross-border connections among Haitian migrants and nonmigrants through the Haitian homosexual transnational space.

I met the young man who was in the bar with his friends a few months later for a formal research interview. I will refer to him as Reggie*[27] in this dissertation. Reggie was a twenty-two-year-old Black gay man living with his parents in Cap Haitian at the time of the interview. He came from a lower social class in Haiti. His parents were uneducated and had a modest lifestyle, selling second-hand house appliances and shoes at the city's main street market located in *Rue 3*. Reggie did not pursue post-secondary education after completing high school at twenty years old because he lacked resources. He worked for a community organization in Northern Haiti. Reggie was good-looking and a good conversationalist. He liked joking around with his friends, as he later told me in the interview. Reggie was well-dressed with an iPhone 8 in his hands when he arrived in an agreed-upon private office space for the interview. He immediately joked with me about how the hot weather was messing with his make-up. We both laughed for a minute before starting the interview.

After asking a few socio-demographic questions about his age, place of residence, gender identity and sexual orientation, and level of education, I asked him about his experience dating men in Northern Haiti and migrants from the Haitian diaspora. Reggie responded with the following:

> "I think *dyasporas* [Haitian gay migrants] are better than gay guys in Haiti. The US dollar is worth more than the Haitian gourde. So, it is better to be with a *dyaspora*. It may happen that I spend a lot of time with gay guys in Haiti… I know love is important, but I cannot eat love. If you [referring to a local gay man] are here to talk to me only [about romance and love] … only to give me love… I prefer *dyaspora's* love because I cannot eat love."

When I heard Reggie voicing that dating Haitian migrants was better than dating local men in Northern Haiti because he "cannot eat love," I was both astonished and eager to analyze why. I was shocked because I grew up in Northern Haiti understanding love traditionally as a feeling separated from money. Growing up there, I often heard that when you love someone, you do so with all your

[27] Reggie is a pseudonym I use to protect the research participant's privacy.

heart, and you are with your partner regardless of what they have. Looking back on my life in Northern Haiti, my Christian upbringing has shaped my understanding of love, which can be captured through the following wedding love vow that romantic partners often swear to each other at Christian weddings: "I _____, take you _____, to be my wedded wife/husband. To have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness or in health, to love and to cherish till death do us part. And, hereto, I pledge my faithfulness to you."[28]

Given the pervasiveness of religion and the total character of Christian socialization in many households in Northern Haiti, almost anyone can recite this rehearsed vow by heart. Therefore, as someone who grew up in Cap Haitian, I was surprised that Reggie was so forthcoming about why he prefers Haitian migrants over nonmigrants in Haiti. It is the opposite of what someone in Northern Haiti would say over a decade ago about why they would want to meet a potential romantic partner. However, as a researcher, I was eager to examine why Reggie perceived Haitian migrants as same-sex intimate partners who would automatically take care of them because they seemingly have 'money.' Beyond Reggie's specific statement, I was also keen to explore whether other gay men in Northern Haiti had a similar perception of Haitian migrants. If not, I wanted to examine why.

In my remaining interviews, I found that Reggie's perception of Haitian migrants as desirable intimate partners was common among men in Northern Haiti. Indeed, forty out of the forty-four gay men who participated in my research perceive Haitian migrants as desirable intimate partners. This represents ninety percent of my sample. My sample does not represent the view of all men who have sex with men in Northern Haiti, as socioeconomic status shapes how nonmigrants perceive migrants. Indeed, thirty-seven out of the forty-four belonged to lower economic classes in Northern Haiti, their SES and economic precarity in the region informed their perception of migrants as desirable intimate

[28] "Christian Wedding Vows: Samples and Useful Tips". Article written by Svitlana Yefimets for the wedding forward website. Published on July 22, 2021. Accessed on June 3rd, 2023. Retrievable here: https://www.weddingforward.com/christian-wedding-vows/

partners. The four research participants with different opinions on Haitian migrants during the interviews initially perceived them as desirable intimate partners but changed their minds about them after undergoing bad experiences with Haitian migrants in their past intimate cross-border relationships.

For instance, Jude*, a twenty-nine-year-old gay research participant, told me during an interview that he was no longer interested in meeting migrants from the Haitian diaspora. The reason was that he realized they all came to Haiti to exploit young, poor Black men. After initially giving them some money, they promised Northern Haiti's men material things, including regular money transfers, smartphones, clothes, or visas, which they had no intention to deliver. They had lots of sex with men in Northern Haiti. They broke their hearts. They returned to their country of residence overseas and cut all communication and ties with them. Thus, they did not care about men in Northern Haiti. Because of his view on Haitian migrants, he avoided meeting potential partners from the Haitian diaspora because he did not take them seriously.

Pierre*, a thirty-five-year-old gay research participant who was disillusioned about his relationships with Haitian migrants, shared the following view when I asked him what was different about his relationships with migrants from the Haitian diaspora:

> "I mean *dyaspora* [Haitian gay migrant] can take you to fancy hotels, pools, and restaurants, whereas the person in Haiti cannot do that. The *dyaspora* can also give you a phone, whereas the guy in Haiti cannot do so. That's the main difference. The relationship with guys in Haiti is better. With a person in Haiti, we live with what we have. However, with a *dyaspora*, it is different. They always think that they own you. They want you to be submissive. They always want to boss you around. They always call you on the phone and ask you where you are, what you are doing. When they become too authoritarian, I block them because for me, it is important to have a good relationship with my partner and not feel that they boss me around."

As shared by these two research participants during my interviews with them, Haitian migrants' perceived value as desirable same-sex intimate partners is attached to the money they can bring to men in Northern Haiti. Accordingly, migrants' money is the main reason why men in Northern Haiti perceive them as desirable partners to develop and sustain intimate cross-border

relationships. The higher economic resources they bring from their host societies to the impoverished context of Haiti empower Haitian migrants to do 'things' in Northern Haiti that many nonmigrants, who could be great same-sex intimate partners, cannot do. These things can be anything, from migrants simply paying a phone bill or a meal during their visits to Haiti to sending regular remittances to care for their nonmigrants and their families in Northern Haiti. These things mean a lot in nonmigrants' lives in Northern Haiti.

© Copyright: Carlo Handy Charles. A High-end Hotel Restaurant in Cap Haitian.
Photo in 2021 during my fieldwork in Northern Haiti.

During my fieldwork, I often observed how significant Haitian migrants' economic contributions were for many men in Northern Haiti. For instance, during a tag-alone hospital appointment with a gay man in Northern Haiti, I directly saw how he called his migrant partner in the United States to ask for his help to pay for his medical bills. His migrant partner sent him a receipt of $100 he had just transferred from his bank application on his smartphone. The nonmigrant partner

immediately went to a nearby Western Union office to withdraw the money and settle the bill in the private clinic within an hour. After doing so, he called his partner to thank him profusely for his help. From this perspective, the economic aspect of these relationships is what Pierre, other research participants, and the general population consider as the added value of Haitian migrants, shaping nonmigrants' perception of migrants as desirable same-sex intimate partners in Northern Haiti.

Nonetheless, some research participants think that men in Northern Haiti would be better off if they avoided migrants altogether because they do not have their best interests at heart. In doing so, these nonmigrants perceive Haitian migrants as taking advantage of Haiti's socioeconomic precarity and local perception of them as wealthy migrants to develop intimate cross-border relationships with Haitian nonmigrants, mainly to have sex with them. Once they have sexual intercourse with nonmigrants, they no longer need them or want to stay in touch with them. Therefore, some research participants think it is better for nonmigrants not to have their hopes up as they will be heartbroken when Haitian migrants end these same-sex intimate transnational relationships.

However, despite countless stories of nonmigrants' bad experiences with Haitian migrants, ninety percent of my sample and the general population continue perceiving them as desirable partners to develop intimate relationships. As Reggie put it, he cannot eat love from Northern Haiti's men in whom he could be interested as potential same-sex intimate partners. In Northern Haiti's context of impoverishment and socio-political instability, Reggie's perception of Haitian migrants as better same-sex intimate partners or prospects is understandable. From this perspective, I contend that how nonmigrants perceive and relate to nonmigrants is shaped by the socioeconomic inequality that structures same-sex intimate transnational relationships among migrants and nonmigrants across the Haitian transnational social space.

Socioeconomic inequality between migrants and nonmigrants is not unique to same-sex intimate cross-border relationships. It is not unique either to the case of Haitians. As Glick Schiller

and Fouron (1999), Goldring (1998), Levitt (2001), and Carling (2008) demonstrated, socioeconomic inequality shapes cross-border relationships among heterosexual migrants and nonmigrants in a way that puts migrants in a position of superiority relative to nonmigrants. Migrants' positional superiority shapes how nonmigrants in Haiti (Glick Schiller and Fouron 1999), Mexico (Goldring 1998), the Dominican Republic (Levitt 2001), and Cape Verde (Carling 2008) perceive them and affect the cross-border relationships they develop and sustain with them. However, what is interesting about same-sex intimate cross-border relationships is that homosexual identity and practices intersect with socioeconomic inequality to shape how nonmigrants perceive, connect, and develop relationships with migrants across diasporic communities.

Homosexual Transnational Space and Socioeconomic Inequality

As mentioned above, thirty-seven of the forty-four research participants belong to lower socioeconomic classes in Northern Haiti, and seven belong to the lower-middle class. Their socioeconomic status affects their everyday living conditions and life outcomes in Northern Haiti. Many are poor, and only some can afford to regularly meet their basic needs as human beings. However, regardless of their social class, all must face socioeconomic vulnerability due to the unstable political context of Haiti, among other things. In Haiti, political instability and its economic consequences are a constant worry in everybody's mind. The feeling and experience of socioeconomic vulnerability influence how nonmigrants perceive Haitian migrants. A twenty-seven-year-old bisexual man in Cap Haitian told me during an interview that the gay men in Northern Haiti who perceive Haitian migrants as "people who can help them" do so because they do not have a job or lack a secure economic situation in Northern Haiti. From this perspective, having a job or not differentiates which nonmigrants perceive Haitian migrants as desirable intimate partners.

A job in Northern Haiti's context does not only refer to formal employment in a public institution or a private company. During my ethnographic fieldwork, I observed that the notion of 'having a job' is loosely used in Northern Haiti to refer to any form of economic activity that allows someone to make a steady living or make ends meet. The criteria for having a job are not as set as they tend to be in Western cultures in North America and Europe, for instance. The same research participant stated: "For someone like me, for instance, who is working, *M pa tèlman rete sou diaspora* [I do not seek Haitian migrants]. We may chat, but I won't ask for money every day... As I work and take care of myself, I do not depend on diaspora."

Here, it is interesting that he mentions he does not ask for money '*every day*,' meaning that there may be situations in which he asks his migrant partner for money. As such, though he no longer perceives Haitian migrants as desirable intimate partners, he still knows he can rely on them whenever he has an urgent financial need. Such a perception of Haitian transnational migrants as people whom nonmigrants in the homeland can always rely on when there are facing hardship is pervasive in Haiti. Regardless of a person's socioeconomic status, they know that they can still rely on their family members or friends from the Haitian diaspora to help them (Glick Schiller et al. 1994; Audebert 2006, 2012; 2017; Paul 2012; Cénat et al. 2020). This perception of the Haitian diaspora among nonmigrants in Haiti is important for navigating the Haitian transnational social space to mobilize various kinds of support from Haitian migrants. As Nina Glick Schiller and Georges E. Fouron (1999) assert, many households in Haiti survive on economic remittances that come from family members and friends who live in multiple diasporic sites of the Haitian transnational social space. Some of these remittances may come from migrants living in Florida, New York, Montreal, Paris, and so on.

Because of this perception of the Haitian diaspora and economic precarity in Haiti, it is comprehensible that ninety percent of my sample perceive Haitian migrants as desirable intimate partners. Also, one can argue that it is graspable that the Haitian population would perceive same-sex

intimate transnational relationships among men in Haiti and the Haitian diaspora as being motivated by the same logic. Indeed, this view of same-sex transnational relationships is not only widely shared by the Haitian population in everyday conversations but also by prominent media personalities and religious leaders in Haiti and the Haitian diaspora. However, it is often misunderstood that money is not the only reason men in Northern Haiti perceive migrants across the Haitian diaspora as desirable same-sex intimate partners.

While Haitian migrants' money is fundamental to the economic survival of many nonmigrants in Haiti, my eleven months of fieldwork among men in Northern Haiti made me question the perception that money is the sole and only reason why Haitian migrants and nonmigrants across the Haitian transnational social space get involved and sustain same-sex intimate cross-border relationships. Instead, I argue that homosexuality is a dimension of power that intersects with the Haitian transnational space – as physical distance and socio-cultural proximity – and socioeconomic inequality to shape and organize how nonmigrants in Northern Haiti connect with migrants across the Haitian diaspora to develop same-sex intimate cross-border relationships.

Haitian Homosexual Transnational Space: Physical and Virtual

As I argued above, the Haitian homosexual transnational space, as both physical distance and socio-cultural proximity, connects men from Northern Haiti to those across the Haitian diaspora in the Caribbean, the Americas, and Europe through cultural geography. The Haitian homosexual transnational space is navigated by Haitian men physically and virtually. Fifty-seven percent of my research participants met their migrant partners in physical places in Northern Haiti versus forty-three who met their migrant partners online. Physical spaces are cities and towns in Northern Haiti and the Dominican Republic, where Haitian nonmigrants meet their migrant partners when they visit the Caribbean. Nine research participants met their migrant partners through mutual friends in Northern

Haiti. Five had started same-sex intimate relationships with their migrant partners before they left Haiti, which they sustain transnationally via virtual spaces. Eleven met their migrant partners during voodoo ceremonies and private parties when gay migrants vacationed in Northern Haiti.

Virtual spaces are gay dating applications, such as Grindr and social media, such as Facebook and messaging apps, such as WhatsApp groups, where Haitian nonmigrants and migrants connect online to develop their same-sex intimate transnational relationships. Nineteen research participants met their migrant partners virtually and have used these virtual spaces to sustain their same-sex intimate cross-border relationships. As I observed during fieldwork, men in Northern Haiti navigate these physical and virtual spaces transnationally as one social space. Because Haitian nonmigrants' lives are embedded in the Haitian homosexual transnational space, I argue that they mobilize their homosexual identity and practices as a stigmatized social identity and taboo sexual practices in Haitian culture to connect with Haitian migrants and develop same-sex intimate transnational relationships that span the nation-states' borders of where migrants and nonmigrants live.

Homosexual Transnational Physical Places

In June 2021, I met Martin* via one of the two gay friendship networks I met regularly for my field observations in Northern Haiti. Martin was a twenty-six-year-old, light-skinned gay man. He lived alone in a house that was still in construction on the outskirts of Cap Haitian. The house had one bedroom, a kitchen, a dining room, and an unfinished bathroom. It did not have electricity or running water like most households in Cap Haitian. He was the only child in his family. His parents passed away, but he had a few close family members who lived nearby. He completed his secondary education in one of the four prestigious Catholic schools in the city, where he met his migrant partner, who left Haiti to reside in New York City. Martin projected a 'natural' confidence and had a certain charm, which his friends often called pretentiousness or aloofness. In general, students who attend the four

primary and secondary Catholic schools in Cap Haitian are often perceived as being pretentious because of the type of education they receive there.

Martin did not have a job when we met. However, he always had the means to pay for his numerous nights out in Cap Haitian, Port-au-Prince, and the Dominican Republic. Whenever we met, Martin was well-dressed. Sometimes, he would wear the latest fashionable clothes available in Haiti and overseas. He was proud of his ability to dress well, which he often attributed to the notion of 'class.' For him, and in the Haitian culture, being able to dress well meant that he had 'class.' Martin had gay friendship networks in Cap Haitian, Port-au-Prince, and various countries across the Haitian diaspora. They remained connected on WhatsApp and joked through text messages constantly. He organized a party for his twenty-seventh birthday, which many of his gay friends from Haiti and the Haitian diaspora attended. Some of them travelled from Port-au-Prince, Montreal, New York, Boston, New Jersey, Miami, Santiago de Los Caballeros, and Santo Domingo to attend Martin's weekend birthday party, bringing numerous gifts to him.

The party was also well attended by his local friends – straight, gay, and lesbian – in Cap Haitian. During the party, some of his single migrant friends met some local gay men, whom they started dating during their time in Cap Haitian. Their love connections seemed instantaneous. Migrants were the ones who often initiated conversations with nonmigrants in Northern Haiti. Their conversations followed a similar script. Migrants praised gay nonmigrants' physical beauty. Then, they talked about their lives overseas, often referring to how hard they work to make a living. Those from the United States often repeated a well-known refrain in Northern Haiti about migrant life in the U.S.: 'I work two or three jobs daily. I am always tired but happy with my life there.' Their description of their busy lives in the Haitian diaspora is meant to convey how important they are or how important their jobs are there.

Having lived in, visited, and researched many cities where the Haitian diaspora has settled, I could easily observe how their self-presentation as busy, important, or wealthy migrants while on vacation in Northern Haiti clashed with the harsh reality of many Haitian migrants' lives overseas. For instance, a migrant working as a security guard in Miami may go to Haiti and pretend to work in an important 'office.' Their office job description often sounds important but vague. Therefore, no one in Northern Haiti could ever be sure exactly what they really did for a living. Another case in point is a Haitian migrant who works as a valet parker in Montreal and takes photos posing with clients' cars to show how well he is doing overseas. When he comes to Northern Haiti, he may show these photos to his friends to illustrate his 'high socioeconomic status' in Canada. Migrants' self-presentation as important people with busy jobs in the Haitian diaspora contributes to shaping their perception as desirable partners by nonmigrants in Haiti. As the literature on transnational migration (Goldring 1998; Levitt 2001; Carling 2008) has shown, this is not unique to the case of Haiti.

During Martin's birthday party, many migrants presented themselves according to these stereotypes, which positioned them as desirable intimate partners in the impoverished context of Northern Haiti, where jobs are scarce, if not non-existent. Given their self-presentation and the money and credit cards they bring with them while on vacation in Northern Haiti, some gay nonmigrants see houses like Martin's and parties like his birthday as transnational physical places to meet potential migrant partners in Northern Haiti. In the same vein, given their perception as desirable intimate partners by the local population, migrants seemingly use a place like Martin's house as a transnational physical place in Northern Haiti to meet nonmigrants to have sex while they are in Haiti or develop intimate cross-border relationships after they return to their countries of residence.

Gay Private Houses as Transnational Places

From this perspective, Martin's house epitomizes a transnational physical place where Haitian nonmigrants meet Haitian migrants to develop same-sex intimate cross-border relationships. In doing so, Martin embodies the Haitian homosexual transnational space that connects nonmigrant networks in Northern Haiti to migrant networks across the Haitian diaspora. Put differently, Martin's house is a transnational place imbued with homosexual meanings by both Haitian migrants and nonmigrants who practice same-sex intimacy, where they know they can meet fellow Haitian men to develop and sustain same-sex intimate transnational relationships. These meanings are grounded in their experience of same-sex identity and practices across the Haitian transnational social space.

Mutual friends like Martin are pivotal to the transnational connections and relationships that Haitian nonmigrants develop with migrants not only in Northern Haiti but also in the Dominican Republic, which is one of the central poles of the Haitian diaspora (Audebert 2012, 2021; Jackson 2013; Zéphirin 2019; Audebert and Joseph 2022). For instance, Jacques*, a thirty-year-old gay research participant, illustrates this point with the following:

> "I met him [his current gay migrant partner] when I was in the Dominican Republic. I was eating somewhere when a friend called me to meet him at the Hilton Hotel in Santo Domingo. When I met him, he complimented me on my physique and told me he wanted to be in a relationship with me. So, we enjoyed ourselves. Even when he left the Dominican Republic to return to California, he still sent money to me regularly because he knew that he had a wife in Haiti whom he should take care of *comme ça doit* [as he should]."

In this excerpt, this research participant pointed out that he met his current partner through a mutual gay friend he went on vacation with to the Dominican Republic. His gay friend lived in the Dominican Republic and hosted him for his vacation there. Through that mutual friend, he met his migrant partner, who is a health practitioner in California. Some of the money his partner makes while caring for elderly people and those with disabilities in the United States is sent as regular remittances to support him in Northern Haiti. Jacques sees the remittances his migrant partner regularly sends as his moral and financial obligation toward him because he does not have a job in Northern Haiti.

This shows how same-sex intimate transnational relationships among Haitian migrants and nonmigrants are grounded in the same logic of moral and financial obligations that shape transnational relationships between straight Haitians (Glick Schiller et al. 1995). As Glick Schiller and collaborators (1995) argued, Haitian migrants feel indebted to nonmigrants who have stayed behind. This shapes the economic remittances they send to them regularly. In this sense, it is imaginable that Haitian migrants who develop same-sex intimate cross-border relationships with nonmigrants may also have the same moral obligations towards their families in Haiti besides their same-sex relationships. It would be interesting to examine how migrants manage to send remittances to their families and their parallel same-sex relationships in Northern Haiti. However, in this thesis, I focus on the experiences and perspectives of nonmigrants who engaged in same-sex intimate relationships with Haitian migrant partners.

More importantly, places like Martin's house show how Haitian migrants and nonmigrants navigate the Haitian transnational social space to meet same-sex intimate partners and develop cross-border relationships. Nonmigrants do so through physical border-crossing movements from Haiti to the Dominican Republic, where they meet migrants who travel from the United States, Canada, and France to vacation there.

Voodoo and Tourist Sites as Transnational Places in Northern Haiti

In addition to private houses in Northern Haiti and the Dominican Republic, voodoo ceremonies, patronal feasts, and tourist sites in Northern Haiti are important transnational physical places where Haitian migrants and nonmigrants meet and develop same-sex intimate cross-border relationships. Voodoo ceremonies are important rituals in Haitian culture that predate the Haitian Revolution in 1804. In these ceremonies, Haitians often pray to spirits to cure sick family members and deliver them from evils. In Haitian history, African slaves reportedly performed voodoo rituals to

free Haiti from the oppression of French colonizers before the independence wars from 1791 to 1803. Patronal feasts are Catholic cultural events that Haitians celebrate as national holidays. Jasmine*, a twenty-seven-year-old transgender research participant, met her migrant partner who lives in Miami during a voodoo ceremony in Northern Haiti.

Her partner had come to Haiti to attend the ceremony when a romantic connection sparked between them. After the ceremony, they exchanged phone numbers and chatted for a while until they decided to start an intimate cross-border relationship after the gay migrant returned to Miami. Jasmine said, "The more we chatted and talked to each other, the more I was comfortable with him. I became his wife." They had been in a committed relationship for two years at the time of the interview. The gay migrant had a trading business in Haiti, which Jasmine oversaw. They were planning their wedding and Jasmine's immigration to Miami when I met her for the interview.

Like Jasmine, Fabre*, a twenty-five-year-old MSM, met his migrant partner during the Saint Jacques patronal feast day at La Plaine du Nord in Northern Haiti. His migrant partner had come to Haiti from Paris to enjoy the three-day celebration. They met while dancing. They exchanged phone numbers to keep in touch. They had sexual intercourse the same evening and developed a same-sex, intimate, cross-border relationship that had lasted a year when I met Fabre for the interview. Additionally, tourist sites, such as La Citadelle La Ferrière, Le Palais Sans Souci, Vertières, île-à-Rats, Cormier Beach, Labadee Beach and Resorts are often physical places in Northern Haiti where Haitian migrants and nonmigrants meet to develop same-sex intimate connections and relationships.

For instance, Robyn*, a twenty-two-year-old gay research participant, told me he had met his migrant partner during a beach trip to Île-à-Rats, where Haitian migrants visiting Northern Haiti often go on vacation. He detailed how they met and developed their same-sex intimate cross-border relationship in the following:

> "We were both on the boat when I noticed that he was looking at me insistently. Then, I started dancing to a hit song. He complimented me on how I was dancing. I thanked him, and minutes later, we exchanged phone numbers and started

> chatting. He invited me to a restaurant. He asked me how I was living. I explained to him how I lived and how things were with my family. Then, he said he would leave the country soon and would like to leave me with something. He gave me a gift – a necklace. The next day, he took me to visit his hometown. Then, the day after, he was on his way back to Miami. When we arrived at the airport, he asked me what I would give him as a gift before he left Haiti. He said he would like to have something from me to keep as a memory of our meeting. As my head was close to him, I kissed him. He asked me whether I would make him suffer if he was in a relationship with him. I told him that it would depend on how our relationship grows. He took some time to think about that, and he left. When he arrived in the U.S., he sent me 200 USD to buy a new phone. He told me that he gave me this phone [pointing the phone to me] to call me all the time and would like to find me when he calls. So, he considered me the only person that mattered to him. He calls me all the time. Because of our habits with each other, I fell in love with him."

In this detailed account of how their same-sex intimate cross-border relationship started in Haiti, this participant illustrates how a beach, such as Île-à-rats, became a transnational physical place where Haitian migrants and nonmigrants meet to develop connections and same-sex intimate relationships that span the national borders of the countries where they reside. As many research participants experience it, places in Northern Haiti, such as a private house, a public beach, and a tourist site, which may be seen as trivial, become important homosexual transnational places that connect migrants with nonmigrants.

The Significance of Homosexual Transnational Places in Northern Haiti

Many of the nonmigrants who started their same-sex intimate cross-border relationships with Haitian migrants would not have been able to do so without these transnational places in Northern Haiti due to the physical distance between Haiti and the Haitian diaspora. These physical places become homosexual transnational places because of the sociocultural meanings that Haitian men in Northern Haiti and the diaspora attribute to them. As discussed above, these meanings are grounded in Haitian men's socio-cultural experience of their same-sex identity and practices across the Haitian transnational social space. In this sense, physical places, such as Martin's household, tourist sites, and beaches, provide Haitian men with a sense of socio-cultural proximity despite the physical distance that separates their places of residence in Haiti from those in the Haitian diaspora.

As many nonmigrants often complained, visiting Northern Haiti for many migrants became a way to experience their homosexual identity and practices far away from the heteronormative lives they seemingly carry in the Haitian diaspora. I also observed during fieldwork that migrants visited Northern Haiti to reconnect with Haitian culture. From this perspective, nonmigrants become pivotal to migrants' decision to come to Haiti, even though they may tell their families in the Haitian diaspora that they are going there to reconnect with their culture and heritage. In this sense, visiting Haiti – as their homeland – and their nonmigrant partners to practice same-sex intimacy do not seem mutually exclusive. They are the same activity: same-sex intimate partners represent Haiti, and Haiti represents same-sex intimate partners. Therefore, same-sex intimate partners in Northern Haiti embody a combination of sexual desire and homeland culture, seemingly allowing Haitian transmigrants to culturally reconnect to their country of origin while developing intimate relationships with their nonmigrant partners.

In doing so, migrants' visits to Haiti seemingly increase their socio-cultural proximity with nonmigrants as Haiti is imbued with sociocultural meanings, reminding them of their past or current experience of homosexuality as taboo and a stigmatized identity, which is also often the object of discrimination in both their homeland and diasporic communities. For many nonmigrants in Northern Haiti, these private gay households, beaches, and historical and tourist sites are transnational physical places where they can meet migrants from the Haitian diaspora. Because these places symbolize Haitian national culture for many migrants, which they often visit when they return to Haiti, Haitian nonmigrants attribute to them the meaning of meeting Haitian migrants to develop connections and same-sex intimate relationships.

These meanings are grounded in nonmigrants' sense of socio-cultural proximity with Haitian migrants, whom they perceive as sharing the same experience of homosexuality as a taboo and stigmatized identity across the Haitian transnational social space. However, contrary to Haitian

migrants who may perceive these physical places in Northern Haiti as embodying the Haitian culture they seemingly seek to reconnect with via their same-sex intimate relationships with nonmigrants, Haitian nonmigrants see these places as embodying concrete transnational places where they can meet the migrant partner of their dream to develop connections and, eventually, fruitful same-sex intimate cross-border relationships.

Given the significance of these same-sex intimate relationships for men in Northern Haiti, some navigate these transnational physical places with eagerness and hope. In a sense, gay private households and historical and tourist places in Northern Haiti have become a transnational refuge for many men in Northern Haiti hoping to find their sought-after migrant partners. As such, they are imbued with homosexual meanings that connect nonmigrants to migrants across the Haitian transnational social space through shared cultural geography.

Homosexual Transnational Virtual Spaces

As mentioned above, nineteen out of my forty-four research participants in Northern Haiti met their intimate migrant partners online via virtual spaces such as Facebook, Grindr, and WhatsApp group messages. This represents forty-three percent of my sample. Facebook is by far the most used virtual space by nonmigrants in Northern Haiti to meet migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora. Twelve research participants said they met migrants who became their same-sex intimate partners on Facebook. Grindr came second to Facebook as six men in Northern Haiti met their same-sex migrant partners there. WhatsApp is a virtual space where Haitian nonmigrants meet Haitian migrants in the same gay friendship networks. WhatsApp is also the virtual space where all research participants who met their partners online developed and sustained long-term same-sex intimate transnational relationships over time. Other virtual spaces where nonmigrants in Northern Haiti said they met same-sex migrant partners in the past include hi5, Badoo, YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram.

Facebook as a Homosexual Transnational Virtual Space

I met Junior*, a twenty-seven bisexual research participant who met his migrant partner on Facebook, for an interview in Vaudreuil, a middle-class suburb of Cap Haitian. We had set to meet in early July 2021. However, we delayed our interview to September 2021, as the country fell into disarray following the assassination of Jovenel Moïse, the then-sitting Haitian President, and the 7.2 magnitude earthquake that killed over two thousand people and ravaged several cities in South-Western Haiti. Junior completed some university education in psychology at a private institution in Cap Haitian and worked as a pair educator in an LGBTQ+ organization in Northern Haiti. He had a side hustle, selling imported clothes from the United States and the Dominican Republic. He lived in a two-bedroom apartment with his mother, whom he cared for. The apartment is built in a way that allowed him to have privacy if he wanted to bring an intimate partner home to enjoy some alone time. He mentioned that it was vital for him to live in such an apartment with his mother, whom he loved dearly and could not live away from.

Junior is probably among the most well-connected gay men I have met in Northern Haiti. He had lots of friends and seemed to navigate the numerous gay friendships he belongs to with ease and diplomacy. He was a dark-skinned, good-looking gay man with a great smile. He was very polite but also direct. He made friends and strangers feel immediately comfortable with his good manners. He seemed genuine and caring. During our interview, I asked him about how he met his same-sex migrant partners, and he responded the following: "I met one of them on Facebook." Like Junior, many men in Northern Haiti who met their same-sex intimate migrant partners online used Facebook.

To connect with men from the Haitian diaspora on Facebook, most men in Northern Haiti created fake profiles, which they called their *masisi* [gay or homosexual] profiles. This means that their profile is geared toward other gay men or men who have sex with men. To do so, the research participants 'in the closet' used anonymous photos or anime, downloaded from the internet, of two

men kissing or hugging affectionately. In other cases, they used male naked torso images of handsome models, gay porn actors or openly gay celebrities they find on the internet to indicate their profile is gay. As such, the Facebook profiles of research participants who were in the closet often looked foreign compared to Haitian Facebook profiles. The openly gay research participants used their real pictures to connect with men across the Haitian diaspora.

When I asked them during the interviews how they recognized Haitian 'gay' migrants to chat with on Facebook, they responded that men across the Haitian diaspora were often the ones who initiated contact with them. Because of their *masisi* profiles, Haitian migrants could easily find them while surfing on Facebook. Sometimes, they were recognized by Haitian migrants who were part of the same gay friendship networks and had mutual friends on Facebook. Their online conversations followed the same script as the in-person conversations described earlier. Haitian migrants often initiate conversations with nonmigrants, presenting themselves as looking for 'good' friends in Haiti. Kevens*, a twenty-year-old research participant who identifies as straight and bisexual, illustrates this with the following:

> "He contacted me on Facebook. He sent me a friend request that I accepted. Then, he texted me on Facebook Messenger. He said hello and asked me how I was doing. He asked me for my name and told me that a photo I had just posted on Facebook caught his attention, and he was very attracted to me. It was a pic of my naked torso. I said, "Ok," not a problem. Then, he asked me for my WhatsApp number. I gave it to him. Then, he started sending me photos and videos."

Another research participant shared with me that a gay migrant once approached him on Facebook and said that he was looking for a 'deep friendship' or *une amitié profonde* in French. When the gay nonmigrant asked the gay migrant what that meant, he replied that a 'deep friendship' meant that they would be just friends to the outside world and boyfriends in the privacy of their home. This was his way of saying they would keep their same-sex intimate cross-border relationship in the closet because, as the nonmigrant found out, the migrant was married to a woman and had three children in the United States, where he resided.

According to many nonmigrants, men from the Haitian diaspora often contacted them to start intimate cross-border relationships. However, men in Northern Haiti sometimes initiated these conversations as well. One nonmigrant told me he had sustained three same-sex intimate cross-border relationships before meeting his current migrant partner. He met all three partners online, and he was the one initiating conversations with all three. One partner lived in Paris. Another lived in Montreal, and the third lived in New York. He told me he spent significant time on Facebook, messaging Haitian men's profiles until he met these three partners. To do so, he looked at his friends' mutual friends on Facebook to see if any Haitian men from their networks was gay and whom he had not met yet. Like migrants, he introduced himself and said he wanted to make 'good friends' from the Haitian diaspora. This was his way of saying that he was interested in gay relationships.

While he never told the men he contacted that he was looking for someone to help him financially, he told me that receiving migrant remittances was the main reason he contacted gay men from the Haitian diaspora. He said that he was frankly not interested in same-sex intimate cross-border relationships with Haitian migrants but in someone who could help him because his mother was sick and had no means to care for her. His mother had cancer, and her situation was deteriorating very quickly. He needed money for her medication and hospital bills, which he did not have because he was not working and could not rely on anyone else but himself to help his mother. He felt guilty that he was not able to help his mother. Therefore, spending time on Facebook to connect with other gay men from the Haitian diaspora, hoping that they would help him, was his last resort. He eventually found a Haitian gay man who sent him $US300 to pay for his mother's medical bills. He was still in touch with this man even though they never developed a same-sex intimate relationship.

Grindr as a Homosexual Transnational Virtual Space

In addition to Facebook, an increasing number of men in Northern Haiti have met their migrant partners on Grindr. Among the nineteen research participants who met their migrant intimate partners online, six used Grindr to connect with gay men across the Haitian diaspora. Grindr is a gay hookup application that was founded in 2009 in Los Angeles, California. Grindr uses location-based social networking and online dating that allow members of the gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer communities to meet online. It was one of the first geosocial apps for gay men, which has become widely popular and used by gay men worldwide. Because of its popularity, many men in Northern Haiti and the Haitian diaspora have used Grindr to connect and develop same-sex intimate cross-border relationships.

Like Facebook, men in Northern Haiti who are 'in the closet' use fake profiles with photos downloaded from the internet to meet migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora. Those who are openly gay use their real photos and names to connect with other gay men on Grindr. Unlike Facebook, conversations on Grindr are more direct. Even though they followed the same structure as Facebook, both migrants and nonmigrants directly tackled why they contacted each other without the awkwardness of asking 'the right questions' to find out whether the person was gay or not. Jean*, a thirty-eight-year-old bisexual research participant, told me he met migrant partners from Canada, the United States, and France on Grindr. He described how he met Haitian migrant partners with the following:

> "You know, as long as you are on the app, you will meet them. Whenever a guy is on the Grindr app, it means that he is gay. Bottoms are looking for tops, and vice versa. For instance, as a top, if I click on another top, the relationship does not work. So, everybody is looking for someone on these apps."

Here, it is interesting how Jean has become familiar with not only the app's functionality but also the language that gay men in North America use to describe the different sexual roles they undertake with their intimate partners. In North American gay parlance, a top refers to the man who

anally penetrates another man, whereas a bottom refers to the man who receives the anal penetration. These anglicisms are now well-known among gay men in Northern Haiti, thanks to Grindr. In Haiti, the language that gay men use to talk about sexual roles and positions is derived from French. Thus, they would use the word 'active' instead of 'top' and 'passive' instead of 'bottom.'

Beyond this, it is also noteworthy that an app that gay men around the world mainly use to meet same-sex intimate partners in the proximity of their homes is now used by men across borders to connect and develop same-sex intimate transnational relationships. Indeed, the main appeal of Grindr is that it uses geospatial location to allow its members in close proximity to connect with each other. From this perspective, Grindr is the preferred method for gay men to meet other gay men who live nearby and are looking for a hookup session simultaneously. Sometimes, Grindr enables gay men looking for a quick, non-string-attached relationship to meet when they are away from their usual homes, such as during their vacation or work-related trips. In the case of Haitian men, Grindr allows them to meet partners that are not immediately available in the proximity of their homes.

WhatsApp as *a Homosexual Transnational Virtual Space*

Once nonmigrants in Northern Haiti connect with migrants from the Haitian diaspora on Facebook and Grindr, they move their conversations to WhatsApp to develop and sustain their same-sex intimate cross-border relationships. WhatsApp is an instant messaging application and voice-over-IP service which allows users to send text and voice messages, make voice and video calls, and share images, documents, user locations, and other content while connected to the internet. Created in 2009 in California and owned by Meta since 2014, WhatsApp has become the world's most popular messaging application, with more than two billion users worldwide[29].

[29] "As WhatsApp Tops 2 billion Users, Its Boss Vows to Defend Encryption". Article written by Jeff Horwitz. Published on February 12, 2020, in the Wall Street Journal. Accessed on June 10th, 2023. Retrieved here: https://www.wsj.com/articles/as-whatsapp-tops-2-billion-users-ceo-vows-to-defend-encryption-11581516000

Many people worldwide use WhatsApp to connect as it has become a cheaper solution to expensive long-distance calls from local telephone companies. Because it is free, anyone can download and use it, provided they have a smartphone with an internet connection. From this perspective, WhatsApp has been widely used by migrants and nonmigrants to remain connected across international borders (Awori et al. 2015). Taking advantage of this technology, nonmigrants in Northern Haiti and migrants in the Haitian diaspora use WhatsApp not only to develop same-sex intimate transnational relationships but also to meet other men who are part of the same WhatsApp group messages. Junior*, the twenty-seven-year-old bisexual research participant I mentioned above, met some of his migrant partners on a WhatsApp group for gay Haitians in Haiti and overseas. He stated:

> "I met the other one from the U.S. on a WhatsApp group. There is a gay WhatsApp group for gay Haitians in Haiti and overseas…. I really loved the one I met on the WhatsApp group. We were in a relationship for two years. He was a very good and caring man."

While Junior could meet his current partner online, not all my research participants in Northern Haiti were lucky enough to be included in a WhatsApp gay group comprising men in Haiti and the Haiti diaspora. Indeed, only three of my research participants met their migrant partners online. For the remaining sixteen, they had to rely on Facebook and Grindr. As Junior and the other two research participants told me, meeting their migrant partners on the Haitian gay WhatsApp group gave them a sense of safety and security because their migrant partners were already members of their network. From this perspective, they developed their relationships faster, and some of these relationships also lasted longer.

To be part of these gay WhatsApp groups, men in Northern Haiti must be invited by a friend who is already a member. Because of the potential benefits that having an intimate partner from the Haitian diaspora can provide to men in Haiti, many nonmigrants are reluctant to invite their gay friends in Northern Haiti to join these groups. Additionally, because many of the migrants are married to

women and have children in the Haitian diaspora, many men in Northern Haiti are afraid of revealing their identities. Indeed, revealing the identity of a Haitian migrant can be costly not only for the partner in Northern Haiti, as their relationship can end abruptly, but also for the migrant, as he can get in trouble with his heterosexual family in the Haitian diaspora. In many cases, ending same-sex intimate transnational relationships means stopping all money transfers to partners in Northern Haiti. In the case of Haitian migrants, as nonmigrants told me, ending their relationship may endanger their 'heterosexual' identity in the Haitian diaspora. From this perspective, migrants and nonmigrants keep these groups highly selective and closed to people they do not trust or vet before letting them in.

The Significance of Homosexual Transnational Virtual Spaces

Facebook, Grindr, and WhatsApp have become transnational virtual spaces imbued with homosexual meanings by men in Northern Haiti and the Haitian diaspora who seek to meet partners to develop and sustain same-sex intimate cross-border relationships. Even though Facebook and WhatsApp are technologies that anyone, including migrants and nonmigrants, can use regardless of their gender and sexual orientation, Haitian men have associated using these technologies with meeting same-sex intimate partners transnationally. Whereas Grindr is an application that is dedicated to the gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community, allowing them to connect with other users in the proximity of their homes, Haitian men have used Grindr to connect and develop same-sex intimate cross-border relationships far away from the proximity of their homes.

What we can learn from these findings is that migrants and nonmigrants use available technologies of information and communication to connect and develop cross-border relationships beyond the heteronormative logic of family and kinship networks that characterize the study of transnational relationships. As discussed above, the field of transnationalism often studies the relationships that migrants and nonmigrants maintain across borders as a way for migrants to care for

their family and kinship networks (Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Portes et al. 1999; Goldring 1998; Levitt 2001; Satzewich and Wong 2006; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Carling 2008; Waldinger 2020; Faist 2000, 2013, 2022). As scholars point out, these relationships are not new, but they are increasing due to migrants' and nonmigrants' access to cheaper information and communication technologies. What scholars have missed in their analyses is how LGBTQ+ migrants and nonmigrants use cheaper information and communication technologies to connect transnationally.

Furthermore, as scholars of transnationalism (Pessar and Malher 2003; Perreñas 2005; Baldassar and Merla 2014) have shown, these technologies have reconfigured gender norms in transnational couples and families. Some female migrants have practiced motherhood via mobile apps to remain present in their children's lives. Other technology-assisted reconfigurations include male nonmigrants taking on caregiving roles by remaining in contact with their wives working overseas or women becoming the breadwinners of their transnational families. From this perspective, transnationalism challenges traditional gender roles in heteronormative families. What is missing in these analyses is how technology-assisted transnationalism challenges traditional ways in which LGBTQ+ migrants and nonmigrants meet and develop intimate relationships. From this perspective, analyzing how gay men use homosexual transnational virtual spaces, such as Facebook, Grindr, and WhatsApp, to connect and develop intimate cross-border relationships significantly contributes to the literature on how technology shapes diaspora, transnationalism, and sexualities.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed how homosexuality is a dimension of power that organizes and shapes cross-border connections and same-sex intimate relationships among Haitian migrants and nonmigrants through the Haitian homosexual transnational space. By dimension of power, I argued that homosexual identity and practices intersect with transnational space and socioeconomic inequality

to shape how Haitian men in Northern Haiti and the Haitian diaspora connect and develop cross-border relationships. As this chapter showed, conceptualizing the Haitian homosexual transnational space as a space of connection for Haitian migrants and nonmigrants has significant implications for research on diaspora, transnationalism, and sexualities.

The diaspora literature often focuses on the nationalistic aspect of diaspora-homeland relationships. This means that scholars often analyze the reasons why co-ethnics and co-nationals from a diaspora develop and maintain ties with their homeland as being motivated by long-distance nationalism. The transnationalism literature explains diaspora-homeland relations by focusing on the relationships migrants in specific host countries develop and maintain with their family members, kinship networks, friends, and the local community in their homeland. The literature on sexualities examines gay men's migration and mobility by focusing on how homophobia and the lack of socioeconomic opportunities drive gay migrants from their homelands to their host societies. In doing so, they show how gay migrants use their gay networks across their transnational social space to move across borders and integrate into their new host countries.

These different bodies of literature lack an examination of how men develop and sustain same-sex intimate cross-border relationships regardless of their migration and mobility projects. To fill this gap, I argued that homosexuality is a dimension of power that intersects with transnational space and socioeconomic inequality to shape and organize how gay men connect and develop relationships that span the national borders of their home and host countries. To do so, I use the Haitian case study to argue that migrants and nonmigrants connect and develop same-sex intimate relationships across borders through the homosexual transnational space, which is a transnational social space that is shaped by cultural geography and imbued with homosexual meanings connecting gay migrants and nonmigrants across national borders.

The Haitian homosexual transnational space is both physical and virtual, which men in Northern Haiti and the Haitian diaspora navigate by mobilizing their homosexual identity and practices as socio-cultural proximity despite the physical distance that separates men in the homeland from those in the diaspora. In this sense, the homosexual transnational space is a concept that allows us to capture how migrants and nonmigrants develop transnational ties and same-sex intimate relationships beyond the heteronormative logic of families and kinship networks, the long-distance nationalism and homophobia that underlies studies in diaspora, transnational migration, and sexualities.

@ Copyright: Carlo Handy Charles. A house built with migrant remittances in Northern Haiti.
Photo taken in one of the neighbourhoods where I conducted my fieldwork in 2021.

CHAPTER V:

TRANSNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS, REMITTANCES, AND MEANINGS

In this chapter, I will analyze how homosexuality intersects with transnational space and socioeconomic inequality to shape the meanings of nonmigrants' intimate cross-border relationships with their migrant partners in the often-heteronormative context of their family and the local community in Northern Haiti. In doing so, I will examine how they negotiate economic, social, and political remittances from migrant partners residing across the Haitian diaspora in the United States, Canada, France, Brazil, Chile, and the Dominican Republic and what these mean to them in Northern Haiti's socioeconomic and political context. This chapter will also address how nonmigrants in Northern Haiti negotiate tensions, contradictions, and conflicts inherent to their unequal transnational relationships with migrants. The main finding I will discuss in this chapter is that homosexuality is a dimension of power that organizes and shapes the circulation of economic, social, and political remittances, i.e., money, sociocultural norms, skills, practices, social capital, and political ideas (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2010; Lacroix et al. 2016) among gay men across the Haitian transnational social space.

The Meanings of Same-sex Intimate Transnational Relationships

"*Monchè, m pat ba w manti, P. trè enpòtan pou mwen. San li, mwen pa tap la jodia. Mesye se poto mitan la vi anm."* [My dear, I cannot lie to you, P. (his migrant partner's name) is very important to me. Without him, I would not be where I am today. He is the pillar of my life.]", said Kelly* during a tag-along day with him in Cap Haitian in 2021. Kelly is a thirty-two-year-old bisexual research participant married to a woman with whom he shares two children while sustaining a hidden, three-year-long intimate cross-border relationship with his wedding's best man residing in Florida. Kelly's family is one of the

two families I spent significant time with while conducting extensive observations for my fieldwork in Northern Haiti.

Kelly is good-looking, athletic, energetic, and seems to always be in a good mood. He is one of seven siblings in his family. His parents have a modest life. His mother worked as a housekeeper for a middle-class family in Cap Haitian, and his father was jobless, which often caused problems in their household. With her meagre monthly income, Kelly's mother was the breadwinner, caring for the entire family even though her children seemed old enough to care for themselves. Because five of Kelly's siblings were unemployed, they still lived with their parents and depended on them to care for their basic needs. They had all completed high school and some post-secondary education. But none have a university degree beyond a two-year technical diploma.

Kelly completed some Information Technology (IT) studies, which basically taught him how to use a computer, a printer, Microsoft Office, Acrobat Reader, Photoshop, and the Internet. With his limited training, Kelly was lucky enough to be hired in one of the main stationaries in his hometown, where he made a modicum of income, mainly typing letters, university assignments, bachelor's theses, and artistic booklets for clients. His job also consisted of printing documents for clients from their USB drives. With this job, Kelly paid for his and his family's basic needs, such as groceries, but relied on his best man to take care of the rest.

For everyone else, Kelly's best man is just a good friend who travelled from Miami to Cap Haitian 'to be there' for him during his wedding day and has financially supported him throughout his marriage. However, after knowing him for three months and gaining his trust, Kelly revealed to me that his best man was a Haitian gay migrant he met on Facebook six months before marrying his then-girlfriend Jacqueline*. They were both twenty-nine years old and contemplated marrying each other but could not do so because of their limited resources. Both came from low socioeconomic classes and could not afford the high costs of a wedding ceremony in Northern Haiti. Marrying someone

requires a significant budget to invite all family members, friends, neighbours, and acquaintances to celebrate their important day.

Like in many cultures, the wedding day is so important that families are sometimes willing to indebt themselves to put on 'the best ceremony ever.' This ceremony includes a religious service and a reception at a big venue that can accommodate many guests, including family members, friends, acquaintances, and neighbours. Most of the time, the families of the soon-to-be-married couple would gather a large budget to decorate the church and the reception venue with expensive flowers and other artifacts. In Northern Haiti, a wedding or a funeral is often an opportunity to show off wealth or *pran wont* [being ridiculed or pitied], depending on a family's socioeconomic class. Wealthy families rent out the best venues in the city for their family members' weddings, while poor families rely on small churches or borrow the house of a wealthy family member or wealthy friend to organize their wedding receptions.

As Kelly and Jacqueline did not have enough money, they considered postponing their wedding until they could afford the significant costs of offering a respectable reception to their guests following the church ceremony. After considering the potential postponement of their wedding, one of Kelly's MSM friends jokingly said a few days later that he should find himself a migrant 'friend' in the Haitian diaspora to cover these costs. Kelly asked him where he would meet such a person. His friend told him that he should find them on Facebook. His friend said there were many gay men in the Haitian diaspora who were looking for partners in Haiti. He added that Kelly should try to see if he meets a migrant partner there. Kelly did not tell his friend he would do it. However, he secretly created a *masisi* [gay] Facebook account and regularly sent friend requests to many Haitian profiles he found on Facebook.

Whenever he found a Haitian *masisi* profile, he befriended it and looked at its friend list to contact them. In the meantime, he also changed his real account setting on Facebook from private to

public so that anyone could send him friendship requests. Over the next few months, he spent significant time browsing every day on Facebook until he met a Haitian migrant who fell in love with him and became his wedding's best man, his "counsellor," his "mentor," and his "best friend" – as he put it. Kelly's migrant partner covered the cost of his wedding ceremony with Jacqueline and helped him buy a small piece of land to build a house on the periphery of his hometown. Over the three years Kelly had been married to Jacqueline, his migrant partner and wedding best man had sent him regular remittances (money transfers) to buy groceries, house appliances, furniture, and pay for medical bills, among other things. Whenever possible, Kelly's migrant partner would send him furniture, cell phones, and other electronic gadgets directly from Miami. He also shared with Kelly advice on navigating his relationship as a newlywed. He mentored him on how 'things' work in a marriage and how he should play his role as a husband. For instance, he told Kelly that he should sometimes cook for his wife, clean the house, and look after the children.

Whenever Kelly and his wife had a problem, he advised Kelly on the best solution to end the conflict. If his wife was distraught about something, he told Kelly to buy flowers to help make things right. Sometimes, the migrant partner's advice was at odds with traditional gender norms in Northern Haiti. Indeed, many men there do not cook or help with house chores when they are married. It is culturally understood that their wives are supposed to take care of the children and the house. Men's obligations and responsibilities include finding money to care for the family [*Al chahe kòb pote nan kay la*]. Traditionally, they are the breadwinners and the figure of authority in their family. To keep up with such a role, most married men who are also parents maintain their distance from their wives and children. In many cases, they feel like distant figures even though they live with their family members under the same roof. Therefore, receiving advice from his migrant partner, telling him to act like a man in a way that is different from his surroundings, produces tension, contradiction, and conflicts between Kelly and his migrant partner.

Beyond his marital problems, Kelly shared with me that his migrant partner also helped him navigate work problems. If he had any disagreements or conflicts with his colleagues at work, Kelly's migrant partner mentored him on approaching the situation best and suggested solutions based on his past experiences in the U.S. Because they chatted and called each other daily, Kelly felt very close to his migrant partner. As he put it, he is "the pillar" of his life. However, Kelly did not share the truth about their relationship with almost anyone except for a close friend. Fearing the disapproval and rejection of his wife and homophobic judgment from his family and the local community in Northern Haiti, Kelly told his family and friends that his migrant partner is a good old-time friend whom he has known for a very long time through a mutual childhood friend, who is now dead. Because his childhood friend is dead, he cannot confirm or deny this information. Therefore, even skeptical people must accept this information at its face value. However, after promising him that I would protect his privacy and anonymize whatever information he shared with me, Kelly told me a very different story about who his migrant partner really was.

He said his migrant partner was also married to a Haitian woman and had five children in Florida. He was fifty-five years old and identified as straight, even though he had been involved in various same-sex relationships with other men. After migrating to the United States, he worked hard to build several businesses until he opened a small store in a predominantly Haitian neighbourhood in Florida. That is all Kelly was willing to share with me about his migrant partner's identity. Whenever I pressed him for more information, he was reluctant to share more with me and preferred to change the topic instantly.

Kelly did not always seem to feel comfortable lying to his friends and family about who his migrant partner really was and what he meant to him. He often evaded interlocutors' looks when responding to his family's and friends' inquisitive remarks about his best man/friend. I often observed how he uncomfortably lied about meeting his 'best man' through a deceased friend. He told me that

his wife often asked specific questions about his best man's childhood in Northern Haiti and his situation in the United States, and he often had to lie to her. He only told a close friend who is also married to a woman while maintaining a parallel same-sex intimate relationship with a Haitian migrant. He told me he shared that part of him because he felt comfortable with him due to the similarity of their situations. In his friend, Kelly found someone he could confide in about the positive and negative aspects of being involved in a hidden, intimate cross-border relationship with a Haitian migrant.

As it turned out, keeping this relationship a secret for so long had taken an emotional toll on Kelly because he often felt conflicted about whether to continue this kind of relationship or give it up altogether. However, considering the various remittances he was receiving from his migrant partner, he kept it going and did not stop it even after my fieldwork in Northern Haiti. He continued devising strategies to hide the true nature of his relationship with his migrant partner while navigating the tension, contradictions, and conflicts that emerged from that relationship.

Like Kelly, most research participants did not often want to reveal almost any information about their migrant partners' identities during my interviews with them. As I understood that, I agreed not to ask them specific questions about their migrant partners, so I did not bother them. Some research participants even insisted that they would grant me an interview only if they did not reveal anything about their migrant partners. Because these relationships are secretive, I thought they feared me potentially recognizing their migrant partners, as I have lived or travelled to all the diasporic countries where their partners live.

I, however, realized during the fieldwork that their migrant partners did not share much with them about their lives in the Haitian diaspora. I will discuss this in more detail in chapter six, focusing on transnational migration/mobility projects across the Haitian homosexual transnational space. For now, it is interesting that their same-sex intimate cross-border relationships with Haitian migrant partners mean so much to them that some Haitian nonmigrants are willing not to reveal their identities

at any cost. As I discussed in chapter four, meeting and keeping a gay migrant partner is critical to some gay men in Northern Haiti. Revealing the identity of their migrant partners can be costly to them, as some friends may 'steal' them, or their migrant partners may end their same-sex intimate cross-border relationships and stop all transnational ties, including remittances, to protect their privacy and reputation in the Haitian diaspora. Therefore, keeping these intimate transnational relationships secret was vital to gay nonmigrants as they mean a lot to them in Northern Haiti's economic, sociocultural, and political context.

In these relationships, nonmigrants, like Kelly, receive remittances from migrant partners, significantly changing their lives in Northern Haiti. As the case of Kelly illustrates, he does not only receive money from his migrant partner but also mentorship, guidance, advice, skills, strategies, and socio-cultural norms on how to live as a married man and face problems in his personal and professional life. These pieces of advice come from his migrant partner's personal and working experiences, which are seemingly shaped by the available cultural repertoires around gender norms and work etiquette in the United States. While the money Kelly received from his partner helped him financially care for his family, the advice, mentorship, and guidance helped him emotionally care for his family and savvily navigate his working environment.

In this sense, the remittances Kelly received from his migrant partner are not only economic but also social (Levitt 1998; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2010; Lacroix et al. 2016). They shape not only his intimate relationships but also his understanding of gender and sexuality as well as his professional life and relationships with his broader family, coworkers, and the local community in Northern Haiti. Such social remittances are as important for Kelly and many other nonmigrants in Northern Haiti as the money they receive from their Haitian migrant partners. In some cases, nonmigrants receive political remittances, i.e., political ideas about fighting for gay men's human rights in Haiti's socio-political context shaped by postcolonial homophobia (Durban 2022).

Homosexuality Shapes and Organizes Remittances in Transnational Relationships

Sharing economic, social, and political remittances is not unique to same-sex intimate transnational relationships. As the literature has shown, transnational migrants remit money (Portes et al. 1999; Goldring 1998; Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001; Orozco 2006, 2010, 2019; Carling 2008; Simmons 2010; Paul 2012; Orozco and Jewers 2019), sociocultural norms and political ideas (Levitt 1998, 2001; Pessar and Malher 2003; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2010; Boccagni and Decimo 2013; Lacroix et al. 2016) to nonmigrants across the world. As Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) assert, remittances shape not only migrants' and nonmigrants' lives but also their families, local communities, and the nation-state in their host and home societies.

While this body of literature has significantly contributed to our understanding of how migrants and nonmigrants share remittances across international borders, they often assume that migrants remit money, sociocultural norms, and political ideas to nonmigrants because they are motivated by the heteronormative logic of family, kinship, and friendship networks (Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Goldring 1998; Faist 2000; Pessar and Malher 2003; Parreñas 2005; Satzewich and Wong 2006; Carling 2008; Simmons 2010) or to contribute to their home country's long-distance nationalism (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001; Levitt 2001; Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004). In other words, migrants – often heterosexual research participants – send money to care for their family and kinship networks or sociocultural norms and political ideas to foster economic and democratic development in their home country. From this perspective, migrants' remittances are understood as primarily family-oriented, local community-driven, and nationalistic.

What is noteworthy in the case of Haitian migrants and nonmigrants, as I argue in this thesis, is that homosexual identity and practices are a dimension of power (Manalansan 2006; Luibhéid 2008; Cantú 2009; Carrillo 2017) that organize and shape their sharing remittances beyond the heteronormative logic of family and kinship networks but in conjunction with the idea of the Haitian

nation-state as a transnational social space. By positing that homosexuality is a dimension of power, I argue that homosexuality is the primary reason that motivates migrants and nonmigrants to connect across the Haitian transnational social space and develop same-sex intimate transnational relationships through which they remit money, sociocultural norms, and political ideas.

Furthermore, I argue that the act of sending and receiving remittances produces tensions, contradictions, conflicts, and power struggles among Haitian migrants and nonmigrants due to the socioeconomic inequality that shapes their same-sex intimate cross-border relationships across the Haitian transnational social space. As Levitt and Lamba-Nieves (2010) emphasized, not all the remittances migrants send to nonmigrants are positive. From an economic perspective, the money migrants send to nonmigrants assures the socioeconomic survival of many families, kinships, and friendship networks in their homelands. However, as scholars have shown (Benhamou and Cassin 2020), they can negatively affect a country's economy, individuals' saving capacity, and the economic development of an entire region.

There are also many negative aspects of receiving sociocultural and political remittances from migrants in the homeland (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2010; Lacroix et al. 2016), creating some tensions, contradictions, conflicts, and power struggles that shape the unequal relationships that nonmigrants maintain with migrants (Goldring 1998; Faist 2000; Levitt 2001; Carling 2008). Building on this literature, I contend that the homosexual identity and practices of Haitian migrants and nonmigrants intersect with socioeconomic inequality and the Haitian transnational social space to shape and organize the remittances they share across the national borders of their home and host countries. In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss how nonmigrants, like Kelly, negotiate economic, social, and political remittances in the often-heteronormative context of their family and the local community in Northern Haiti as they navigate the tensions, contradictions, conflicts, and power struggles inherent to their intimate transnational relationships with migrants from across the Haitian diaspora.

The Volume of Economic Remittances in Same-sex Intimate Transnational Relationships

In 2022, Haitian migrants sent an estimated 3.1 billion US dollars in remittances to nonmigrants in Haiti, representing more than sixty percent of foreign cash inflow in the country[30]. Although the remittances Haitian migrants sent to Haiti in 2022 accounted only for 0.48 percent of the 647 billion US dollars of global remittance flows from international migrants worldwide[31], they made up 22.4 percent of Haiti's Gross Domestic Product[32]. This made Haiti one of the top Caribbean and Latin America remittance-receiving countries and the top tenth country worldwide, whose GDP is mostly derived from migrant remittance inflows[33]. These numbers are significant for Haiti – a Caribbean Island of over eleven million inhabitants with approximately four million migrants worldwide[34].

Remittances come from many host countries where Haitian migrants have resettled and formed diasporic communities over the past seven decades (Orozco 2006; Simmons 2006; Jackson 2013; Audebert and Joseph 2022). According to a Bank of Haiti report,[35] 72 percent of remittances in 2018 came from Haitian migrants in the United States versus 7 percent from Chile, 4.4 percent from Canada, 2.7 percent from the Dominican Republic, and 2.3 percent from Brazil. Based on this Bank

[30] "Haiti's Turnaround and Its Impact on Remittances". Article published on November 15, 2022. Retrieved: https://www.thedialogue.org/blogs/2022/11/haitis-turnaround-and-its-impact-on-remittances/#:~:text=Haitian%20remittances%20reached%20US%24%203.1%20billion%20in%202022.

[31] "Migration and development Brief 38" Published by KNOMAD in June 2023. Accessed in June 28th, 2023. Retrievable here: https://www.knomad.org/publication/migration-and-development-brief-38

[32] "Animated Chart: Remittance flows and GDP impact by country". Article written by Richie Lionell for the Workd Economic Forum. Published on January 27, 2023. Accessed on June 20th, 2023. Retrievable here: https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/01/chart-remittance-flows-impact-gdp-country/

[33] "Animated Chart: Remittance flows and GDP impact by country". Article written by Richie Lionell for the Workd Economic Forum. Published on January 27, 2023. Accessed on June 20th, 2023. Retrievable here: https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/01/chart-remittance-flows-impact-gdp-country/

[34]"Haitian migration through the Americas: A decade in the making". Article written by Caitlyn Yates for the Migration Policy Institute and published on September 30, 2021. Accessed on July 8th, 2023. Retrievable here: https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/haitian-migration-through-americas. The three million Haitian migrants are my estimation based on many articles I have consulted for this research. Some of them are academic (Audebert 2017, Audebert and Joseph 2022). Other are articles from research organizations and centres, such as the MPI, Pew Research centre, the World Bank, IOM, World Economic Forum, among others.

[35] "Haiti: The productive use of remittances" Presentation prepared by Fritz Duroseau and Edwige Jean from La Banque de la République d'Haiti." Published on June 14, 2019. Accessed on June 22nd, 2023. Retrivable here: https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/presentations/brh_haiti-the_productive_use_of_remittances.pdf

of Haiti report, remittances sent to Haiti from other countries where the Haitian diaspora has resettled, including France, can be estimated at 11.6 percent in 2018. The United States, Canada, France, Chile, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic, which are the top origin countries of Haitian remittances, are also the six countries where my research participants' migrant partners reside across the Haitian diaspora.

Based on the volume of remittances that research participants stated during my fieldwork that they received from their migrant partners in Northern Haiti in 2020-2021, I estimate that they received between $1500 and $5000 US per year, if not more, depending on the couple's specific projects that year. For example, it is safe to assume that a nonmigrant partner like Kelly, whom I mentioned above, may have received more than $5000 US from his migrant partner in the United States the year he married his then-girlfriend and bought a piece of land to build their house in Northern Haiti.

According to my estimates, if a nonmigrant received an average of $1500 US per year from his migrant partner in 2021, this means that he received, on average, $125 US monthly. If each nonmigrant in Northern Haiti who was involved in a same-sex intimate relationship with a migrant partner received a total of $1500 US by the end of my fieldwork in 2021, this means that the forty-four nonmigrants received a total of $66,000 US from their migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora that year. If the forty-four research participants were to receive $5000 US from their migrant partners in 2021, this would be a total of $220,000 US in remittances that year. This would represent 0.66 percent of the total 3.1 billion US dollars that Haitian nonmigrants received in remittances in 2022 from migrants across the world.

Understandably, some nonmigrants received higher remittances while others received small amounts, depending on their partners' socioeconomic statuses in their host countries as well as the intensity and longevity of their cross-border relationships. Also, not all relationships last twelve months. Therefore, an average of $1500 US in remittances per year seems more plausible in the

context of same-sex intimate transnational relationships that nonmigrants in Northern Haiti develop and sustain with their migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora in the United States, Canada, France, Chile, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic.

The Meanings of Economic Remittances for Nonmigrants in Northern Haiti

While $US1500 does not seem like a lot of money for nonmigrants to live off annually in Northern Haiti from a North American or European perspective, receiving at least $125 US from a Haitian migrant partner can have a significant impact on nonmigrants' ability to meet their basic needs, including buying food, paying for medical bills, tuition fees, and rent. Fabien*, a twenty-year-old gay research participant, exemplifies the meaning of his migrant partner's remittances in his life with the following:

> "When he left Haiti [for Brazil], he often sent money to me. My mom was not there, my father did not have a job. It was he who paid for my tuition fees and did everything for me. So, I loved him. He sent me *provision* [non-perishable foodstuff]."

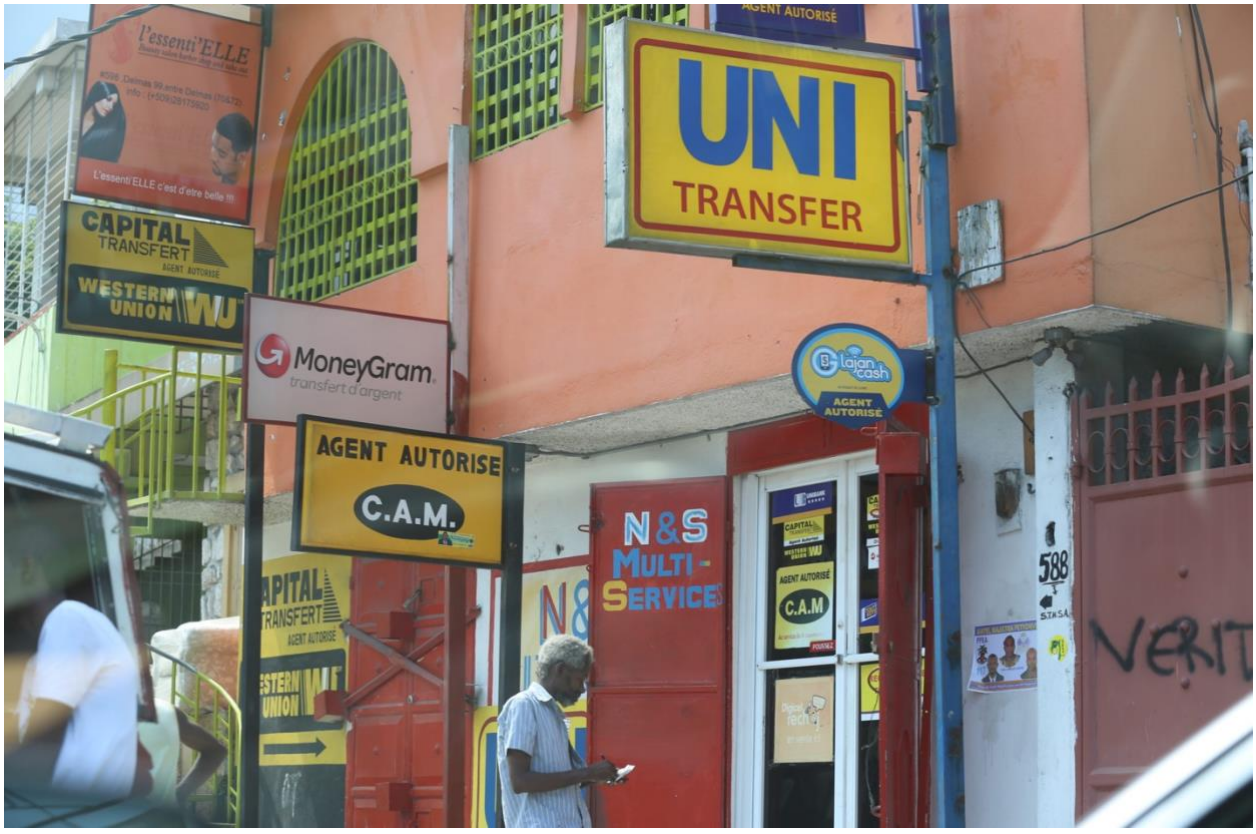
As Fabien put it, his migrant partner paid for his tuition fees and groceries through the remittances he sent him from Brazil. In the context of his family, in which both his parents are jobless and have limited income, his migrant partner's remittances mean a lot. In the same vein, Steven*, another twenty-year-old bisexual research participant, illustrated what his migrant partner's remittances meant to him after he finished high school in Northern Haiti:

> "I failed the entrance exam for the school of management because I got 23 out of 25 points needed to be admitted. Then, I asked him [migrant partner] whether he could help me out because I did not want to spend the whole year without furthering my education. Then, my boyfriend [in Northern Haiti] connected me to a friend of his who knows about tourism. I told the *dyaspora* about it; he told me he would help me pay to go to school."

Here, Steven contacted his migrant partner to ask for help so that he could pay for his tuition fees. As he shared with me in the rest of the interview, his migrant partner effectively sent him enough money to pay for his management training. However, what is remarkable about his situation is that he did not only use his migrant partner's money to pay for his schooling but also shared it with his boyfriend,

who lived in the same apartment in Cap Haitian. In this sense, his migrant partner's money was used to care for their entire household.

Like Kelly and the other participants mentioned above, Steven's intimate cross-border relationship with his migrant partner did not only impact his personal life but that of his local partner and their families in Northern Haiti. Indeed, Steven told me that sometimes he used the remittances he received to help his parents with their medical expenses and groceries. They live in a border town with the Dominican Republic two hours away from Cap Haitian, where Steven lives. They also used Steven's money from his migrant partner to take care of his local partner's family by buying groceries, among other things.



© Copyright: Garry Pierre-Pierre. Money transfer agencies in Haiti.
Photo retrieved from Haiti Liberté on July 7th, 2023.

In addition to paying for tuition fees, food, and medical expenses, nonmigrants in Cap Haitian expressed in interviews that they used their migrant partners' economic remittances to pay rent and start new business ventures. For instance, a thirty-year-old gay research participant said he used the remittances his migrant partner sent him from Miami to open a retail store to sell party decoration materials in Northern Haiti. He opened his store after overseeing his migrant partner's import-export business when the latter was in Miami during their eleven-year-same-sex intimate transnational relationship. His migrant partner relied on him to regularly deposit the business's daily gains in his US account via a Haitian bank, pay employees, and take care of everything the business needed to keep moving forward. As such, the nonmigrant partner had unlimited access to the migrant partner's cash from the business' daily sales, which he kept records of to provide his migrant partners when he was back in Northern Haiti. At some point, the business expanded into new offices, and he oversaw the expansion throughout the city. When they broke up, he opened his own store.

Being aware of the importance of migrants' remittances in Northern Haiti and the temporariness of some same-sex intimate transnational relationships, Jasmine, the transgender research participant I mentioned in chapter four, articulated during the interview that she would like her migrant partner to help her "find a better housing arrangement and to start a beauty salon." She added: "I know how to do hair and nails. If he gives me that business and a house, I can live independently if he leaves me tomorrow." Jasmine's interest in having her own business and house fits the common perception in Cap Haitian that a cross-border relationship with a Haitian migrant may provide a nonmigrant with an opportunity to open a 'business,' meaning a small store to sell foodstuff, clothes, or other products in demand in the city. Such a business does not only allow the nonmigrant involved in an intimate transnational relationship with a Haitian migrant partner to care for themselves but all their family and, sometimes, their friends and the local community.

During my interviews, many of my research participants expressed how they have used migrant remittances to help friends and the local community in Northern Haiti. For instance, a twenty-seven-year-old bisexual research participant shared during my interview with him how he used his partner's remittances to help his uncle's girlfriend. He stated:

> "One of my uncles was in a relationship with a girl who got pregnant. My uncle did not have enough money for an abortion, so he kept the baby and cared for his girlfriend. When it was time for her to deliver the baby, my uncle did not have enough money to operate the caesarean section on the woman. So, the doctor said they did not have to pay right at the moment of the delivery, but they could do so before leaving the hospital. So, I told my boyfriend in France about the situation, and he helped me help my uncle pay for his woman's C-section."

Here, this participant illustrates how the economic remittances he received from his migrant partner helped take care of his extended family member's partner in a situation where they could have been indebted because of their lack of resources.

In various other circumstances, migrant partners do not send money directly to their nonmigrant partners in Haiti but to their parents or friends, who use the funds they receive to help themselves. For instance, Justin*, a twenty-year-old gay research participant, said that his migrant partner not only helped him but also, he helped his mom. He added: "he pays half of the rent for the house where I live with my mom. Whenever I tell him that I would want to eat something specific or wear specific cloth, he does that. I just had my ID this year. So, before then, he used to transfer all the money to me via my mom. Sometimes, he sent me *kontenè nan batiman* [he shipped things] in my mom's name."

When I asked him whether his mother knew that his migrant friend was his intimate partner, he said he had never discussed that with her. He suspected that his mother might be suspicious of the nature of their relationship, but she never asked him specific questions about it. Furthermore, he told me that his mother was a fervent religious person and thought that the money, clothes, and groceries her son's migrant partner sent them regularly from Miami were God's response to her prayers. When

the research participant shared his mother's perspective with me, it was difficult for me to figure out whether his mother had just decided to turn a blind eye to her son's homosexual relationship so that she could continue receiving remittances from his migrant partner or whether she genuinely believed that his son's same-sex relationship was God's blessing in their lives.

Many other research participants expressed during my interviews with them how they used their migrant partners' money to help their family, kinship, and friendship networks in Northern Haiti. In addition to the cases mentioned above, some nonmigrants used their migrant partners' economic remittances to organize parties where gay friendship networks gather to celebrate a member's birthday, graduation from school/university, marriage, or future departure from Northern Haiti to join their partner or family in the Haitian diaspora. Moreover, nonmigrants also used their migrant partners' money to support socio-cultural activities in Northern Haiti, including theatre troops, beauty pageants, concerts, and carnival celebrations in their respective communities or neighbourhoods.

While they did not state that the money that they used to sponsor these activities came from their intimate transnational relationships with migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora, it became clear to me during my fieldwork that migrants' economic remittances did help not only their nonmigrant partners but also their families, and the local community. To help their families and the local community, nonmigrants in Northern Haiti did not often reveal where they found the money. Indeed, in the impoverished context of Northern Haiti, where jobs are scarce, it is inconceivable that some young men of twenty years of age would have enough money to take care of their entire families. Because most nonmigrants are unemployed or do not have any economic activities, it is difficult for them to justify the provenance of such money. Thus, they often must say it comes from their 'good friends' in the Haitian diaspora.

However, in many situations, it seemed apparent to me that their families or straight friends understood that nonmigrants were involved in same-sex intimate relationships that were more than

'just friendships' with migrants across the Haitian diaspora. Nonetheless, many families, friends, neighbours, and kinships who directly or indirectly benefitted from these relationships preferred not to address the origin of nonmigrants' money, as they were used to provide for them and help them in some dire circumstances. This begs an interesting question about how homophobia operates at the micro and meso levels of family and community dynamics in contexts of socioeconomic precarity, such as Northern Haiti.

On the one hand, many gay nonmigrants' family members were critical of homosexuality. As my research participants painfully accounted, some of their family members clearly voiced homophobic opinions and/or supported religious and political protests against homosexuality in Northern Haiti. This shows their stand on the issue of homosexuality in the macro-political context of Haiti. On the other hand, at the micro-individual level, the same people seemed to condone their family members' homosexual relationships by turning a blind eye to it, as it financially benefitted them. This reveals an incongruence between some families' public attitudes toward homosexuality in Northern Haiti and their blissful ignorance of the homosexual relationships that their family members sustain with migrants from the Haitian diaspora.

Moreover, as the case of Justin illustrates, some families may simultaneously use the name of God to justify why they oppose homosexuality in Haiti and why they seemingly condone their children's homosexual relationships with migrant partners from the Haitian diaspora. In other words, homosexuality is bad, but it can also be a blessing from God when it involves Haitian migrant partners' money. As such, public display of homophobia seems to be compatible with private acts of blissful ignorance or acceptance of homosexuality when economic remittances are involved.

Given the precarious socioeconomic context of Northern Haiti, a political act of condemning homosexuality in public protests seems to be difficult to match or reproduce in the privacy of family and community dynamics shaped by Haitian migrant partners' money. In other terms, while some

parents, kins, friends, neighbours, and local community members may participate in street protests to show their opposition to homosexual identity and practices in Northern Haiti, they seemed to indirectly or voluntarily turn a blind eye to the homosexual transnational relationships from which migrant partners remit money to gay nonmigrants in Northern Haiti, who may be their children, friends, neighbours, and coworkers.

Negotiating Homosexuality and Nation Through Economic Remittances

During my fieldwork, I often observed situations in which nonmigrants discussed how Haitian migrants helped them open their stores and buy or build a house. This shows the impact of Haitian migrants' remittances on individual people, families, communities, and the nation. At the macro level, Haitian migrants' remittances have impacted Haiti's standing as an intensive migrant-sending country in the Caribbean region and have significantly affected the country's national economy. According to the Bank of Haiti report mentioned above, Haitian remittances have been the "main source of foreign currency inflow, ten times above public aid flows, and the main supply of the local foreign exchange market."[36]

Additionally, economic remittances have had "a positive impact on exchange and price stability as the pass-through of depreciation to inflation is immediate."[37] By contrast, remittances have had a negative effect on local agricultural production, thus financing imports of non-productive goods. According to the same report, Haiti has become "a net importer of goods, which comes with new consumption habits that make the country's economy very vulnerable to external price shocks."[38] Economic remittances are so important to Haiti that many organizations, including the World Bank

[36] "Haiti: The productive use of remittances" Presentation prepared by Fritz Duroseau and Edwige Jean from La Banque de la République d'Haiti." Published on June 14, 2019. Accessed on June 22nd, 2023. Retrivable here: https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/presentations/brh_haiti-the_productive_use_of_remittances.pdf
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.

and the International Organization for Migration, call for the systematic use of remittances to develop Haiti. Because of the volume of cash that migrants send to Haiti, the Michel Martelly government implemented new policies after the 2010 earthquake to tax international money transfer institutions, such as Western Union and MoneyGram, for every transfer they process in Haiti to contribute to the rebuilding of the country.

At the community level, research has shown that remittances have had positive effects, contributing to the economic development of many communities in Haiti (Orozco 2006; Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo. 2010; Paul 2012; Paul and Séraphin 2015) by funding schools, hospitals, and community centres, among others. At the micro-individual level, remittances have positively impacted many individuals' and families' lives in Haiti (Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001; Simmons et al. 2006; Simmons 2010; Orozco and Jewers 2019). During my fieldwork, I observed how remittances have positively affected local perceptions of Haitian migrants as the saviours of nonmigrants in Haiti. At the same time, some nonmigrants have pointed out that migrants' money is destabilizing the country's economy and creating more dependency and laziness among nonmigrants in Haiti. Some Haitian 'nationalists and patriots' are critical of Haitians leaving the country to look for a better life overseas and send remittances back home. They are equally critical of those who often call their *diaspora* contacts overseas for money, even though they may do the same thing privately.

While the existing literature on Haitian migration and transnationalism has documented how Haitian migrants' remittances have affected individuals, families, local communities, and Haiti as a nation-state, they have mainly conducted their analyses from a heteronormative and nationalist standpoint. As Joanne Nagel (2004) points out, the logic of the nation is often analyzed in a heteronormative way, which systematically excludes the experience of those who do not fit the heteronormativity of nation-state-building projects. These analyses systematically overlook how economic remittances are organized and used among migrants and nonmigrants involved in same-sex

intimate relationships across the Haitian transnational social space. However, if we understand a Haitian migrant's or nonmigrant's sexuality as shaping every aspect of their lives (Luibhéid 2004; Cantú 2009; Carrillo 2017), we will also understand that homosexual identity and practices shape how and why migrants and nonmigrants share remittances across international borders.

Then, it becomes clear that homosexuality is a dimension of power that shapes and organizes economic remittances among Haitian migrants and nonmigrants by connecting them across the Haitian transnational space through cultural geography. Once they are connected, they develop intimate cross-border relationships through which they remit money to take care of their partners in the homeland beyond the heteronormative logic of family and kinship networks but in conjunction with the idea of the Haitian nation as a transnational social space[39] that migrants and nonmigrants can connect through to help each other. As many nonmigrants put it, their migrant partners understand that their situation in the socioeconomic context of Northern Haiti is precarious. Most of them have no jobs or prospects there. As such, migrants from the Haitian diaspora send them money to support not only their nonmigrant partners but also their families and the local community. In doing so, they also help Haiti to survive as a nation-state.

Furthermore, because nonmigrants perceive migrants as sharing the same experience of homosexuality as a stigmatized social identity grounded in taboo same-sex practices in Northern Haiti and the Haitian diaspora, they interpret the economic remittances that they receive from migrants as migrants' way to help them survive in the homophobic context of Northern Haiti. From this perspective, migrants' money is perceived by some nonmigrants as being more than a purely economic transaction. It becomes a way to help men who practice homosexual intimacy to exist socially and

[39] As I discuss in chapter six, the Haitian transnational social space is not perceived uniformly or homogenously by nonmigrants in Northern Haiti. Nonmigrants in Northern Haiti perceive different countries that form the Haitian transnational social space differently. Please refer to Chapter six on Life Projects and Transnational Mobility for an semi-structured discussion of how cultural geography shapes socio-spatial perceptions of nonmigrants of the Haitian transnational social space.

culturally in Haiti. Economic remittances in intimate transnational relationships are perceived by some gay nonmigrants as migrants' means to show solidarity with other men who have sex with men in Haiti.

Homosexuality Organizes and Shapes Social and Political Remittances

In 1998, Peggy Levitt coined the term social remittances to describe the sociocultural norms and ideas that migrants remit to nonmigrants in their transnational relationships. These norms and ideas affect many aspects of nonmigrants' lives in the homeland community, ranging from attitudes toward gender and sexuality, as well as economy, democracy, and politics more broadly. Almost two decades after Levitt's seminal work, Lacroix, Levitt, and Vari-Lavoisier (2016) further developed the concept of social remittances by emphasizing that it allows capturing "the notion that, in addition to money, migration also entails the circulation of ideas, practices, skills, identities, and social capital… between [migrants'] sending and receiving communities." (Levitt et al. 2016:1). To differentiate social remittances from the cultural diffusion of ideas and norms across national borders that occur through globalization processes, Levitt (2014) introduced four ways in which we can identify and account for social remittances.

She asserts, "Social remittance exchanges occur when migrants return to live in or visit their communities of origin; when nonmigrants visit those in the receiving country; or through exchanges of letters, videos, cassettes, e-mails, and telephone calls. The mechanisms of social remittance transmission differ from other types of global cultural dissemination because they travel through identifiable pathways, and their source and destination are clear. Second, they are transmitted systematically and intentionally. Third, they are usually transferred between individuals who know one another or are connected by mutual social ties. Fourth, they are timed, meaning that social remittances do not arise out of the blue" (Levitt 2014:3). Levitt's concept of social remittances has been widely

used in the social sciences (Pessar and Malher 2003; Malher and Pessar 2006; Parreñas 2005; Baldassar et al. 2014) to show how gender norms have circulated across national borders as people migrate from one country to another.

Scholars have used the concept of social remittances to demonstrate how migrants have contributed to the development of local communities in their countries of origin (de Haas 2010; Castles, de Haas, and Miller 2019). In doing so, they have shown how migrants remit to nonmigrants social norms they acquired in their host society to foster social development in their homeland (de Haas 2010). Others have shown that political remittances shape the transnationalization of human rights (Piper 2009; O'Mahony 2013; Krawatzek and Muller-Funk 2020). While this body of scholarship has contributed to our understanding of how socio-cultural norms around gender, social development, and politics circulate among migrants and nonmigrants, most of this research has analyzed such transnational flows from a heteronormative, nationalistic, and community-driven perspective.

As such, little research has focused on how social remittances circulate among LGBTQ+ migrants and nonmigrants beyond a focus on transnational gay rights (Hefler and Miller 1996; Rupp 2011; Haritaworn 2012; Encarnacion 2014; Thoreson 2014; Wahad 2016; Szulc 2018). Furthermore, while Levitt's concept of social remittances can be applied to Haitian migration and diaspora to illustrate how ideas and cultural norms circulate across the Haitian transnational social space (Audebert 2012; Jackson 2013; Audebert and Joseph 2022), little research has empirically analyzed how such socio-cultural norms and ideas shape Haitian nonmigrants' lives in their homeland.

To fill these gaps, I will examine how social and political remittances circulate among Haitian gay migrants and nonmigrants via their intimate transnational relationships and how they negotiate the tension and contradictions that emerge from such transmissions. I will analyze one type of social remittance – gender and sexual norms – and one type of political remittance – socio-cultural norm about gay rights – that Haitian migrants remit to their nonmigrant partners in Northern Haiti. In doing

so, I will show that homosexuality is a dimension of power that organizes the circulation of social and political remittances among migrants and nonmigrants involved in same-sex intimate transnational relationships across the Haitian transnational social space.

Gender and Sexual Norms as Social Remittances in Same-sex Transnational Relationships

Bernard was twenty-nine-year-old when we met. He was a member of one of the two families with whom I spent significant time conducting observations during my fieldwork in 2020-2021 in Northern Haiti. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, he has two sisters and a niece with whom he shares a small two-bedroom apartment on the periphery of Cap Haitian. Bernard is straight-acting, good-looking, athletic, and identifies as gay. He has never had a girlfriend or introduced a romantic partner to his family. He never came out to his sisters, but they clearly understood that he was gay, and they chose never to address the subject of his sexuality. Whenever I was in their household, I could sense that Bernard's homosexuality was the elephant in the room. Bernard often talked to his sisters about their romantic relationships, but he never talked about his.

He was reserved, introverted, and very careful about his appearance and reputation. He often worried about what others might think of him. Because of this, he had a small group of gay friends with whom he often hung out. Bernard is what people in Cap Haitian call 'pretentious.' He was someone who did not often go out if it was not in the company of people he trusted. He had a few sexual partners in Cap Haitian, whom he met through common friends, but he had never had a romantic relationship with someone until he met, on Grindr, a gay migrant partner from Montreal who was vacationing in Northern Haiti. Bernard had been in a long-distance relationship with his migrant partner for six months when I met him in Cap Haitian for my fieldwork in December 2020. I met Bernard through a mutual friend, who was his classmate in high school.

I had never heard of Bernard before my fieldwork as I am older than him. I had completed high school five years before him and had left Haiti soon after. My brother, who lived in Cap Haitian, recognized Bernard and told me once that he suspected that Bernard was gay because he had never had a girlfriend or been seen with a girl. Beyond this vague comment on his perceived gender and sexuality, Bernard was an enigma for my brother. I chatted with Bernard, and we became close. He invited me to his household to meet his sisters and niece, with whom I also became close. Whenever there was an important family event, Bernard invited me to attend with them. Sometimes, they invited me to dine in with them when they made Haitian meals that they knew were my favourites. Bernard was bright and had an implicit understanding of my research, which made it delightful to discuss with him.

As we talked about my research, Bernard asked me about my gender and sexuality, and I revealed to him that I am bisexual and had a male partner in Toronto, where I lived. I asked him about his romantic life, and he shared that he had been involved in a committed long-distance relationship with his migrant partner in Montreal. He told me that his partner was a high school teacher there. He was forty years old. He was single and did not have children. He told Bernard he had a few failed romantic relationships before meeting him and was disillusioned with his dating life in Montreal. Furthermore, Bernard told me that his boyfriend often told him negative things about gay life in Montreal, which is 'all about hookups and one-night stands.' According to his migrant partner, gay men there were not serious or interested in building a life with other gay men. He had long looked for a romantic partner but failed to build a lasting relationship each time.

Bernard told me that when they met, they felt an instant connection. He felt "something real and serious" for the first time in his life. Soon after they met, they spent a lot of time together in the migrant partner's hotel room in Cap Haitian. His migrant partner had rented a car, and the two used it to visit Northern Haiti. Bernard told me he showed him around and spent an 'amazing time' with

him. After his migrant partner returned to Montreal, they kept in touch and decided to pursue a long-distance relationship. They called each other every day and spent over an hour talking to each other until they fell asleep. During their six-month relationship, his partner regularly sent him money transfers, which he used to help his sisters and niece with groceries, rent, tuition fees and other urgent things.

During the summer of 2021, as the COVID-19-related travel restrictions eased, his partner came to see Bernard in Cap Haitian. His partner rented a month-long apartment for seven hundred US dollars in a gated community owned by a *Mulato* family on the hills of upper-class neighborhood, where Bernard regularly spent time with him. This place served as a refuge for both Bernard and his partner, who could isolate themselves from the looks of neighbours, families, and friends to enjoy their romance. Everything seemed to work well for the couple until one day Bernard told me that he was upset with his partner. When I asked him what had happened, he told me that his partner did not respect him as the man of the relationship. I probed to understand what exactly had happened for him to think as such. He expressed that he was the top in their relationship – meaning he was the one who anally penetrated his partner during sex – and should be respected as such.

When I asked him to explain a little more, he told me that as a top, his partner should do what he says because he is the man in the relationship. As a bottom, his migrant partner should be submissive like a Haitian woman in Haiti would be. He said he also felt disrespected by his migrant partner, who wanted him to cook for him. He should not be doing such things as the top and the man of the relationship. His partner, who is 'the bottom' (or the passive in French), meaning he is the one who is anally penetrated, should do these things. His migrant partner seemingly wanted things to be equal, meaning that sometimes he could cook, and other times Bernard should cook. His migrant partner told him that even though he was 'the bottom,' it did not mean he was a traditional Haitian 'woman.' His partner told him that if he wanted things to work out between them in the long run, he

should change his way of thinking about these roles. As two men, they were equal. There were no submissive or dominant there.

This frustrated Bernard, who used to be treated as 'the man' in his past sexual encounters with local men in Northern Haiti. Local men in Northern Haiti usually treat men who are 'top' or 'active' as they would treat men in traditional heteronormative relationships there. While this is not unique to gay men's relationships in Haiti (Hopkins, Sorensen, and Taylor 2013; Donovan and Barnes 2020), Bernard was once confronted with a different norm about gender and sexuality. Through his intimate relationship with a Haitian migrant who lives in Montreal, he learnt that being 'a top' in a sexual role did not mean that he needed to play a traditional male-dominant gender role in his life. Though he was upset with his partner, he learnt that if he wanted his relationship to work, he needed to adjust his way of thinking about gender and sexuality.

Over the next few days, Bernard told me that his migrant partner discussed extensively what it meant to be in a relationship as equal partners. His migrant partner shared with him how relationships between romantic partners that see each other as equal work in Montreal. Though it was difficult for him, Bernard shifted his understanding of gender and sexuality according to his partner's experiences in Montreal. Toward the end of his migrant partner's month-long visit to Northern Haiti, Bernard cooked him a meal and helped clean the flat. In this sense, equality or sharing house chores became a social remittance he learned through his relationship with his migrant partner. As Levitt (1998), Lamba-Nieves (2010), and Lacroix et al. (2016) put it, economic remittance is not the only one that matters in migrant-nonmigrant relationships. Migrants and nonmigrants share sociocultural norms, skills, practices, and identities across national borders, shaping their lives and that of their communities.

Bernard shared what he had experienced in his relationship with his migrant partner with his gay friends in Northern Haiti, who reflected on the episode and joked about how different Haitian

gay men in Canada are as opposed to gay migrants from other countries of the Haitian diaspora. This comment on Migrants' lives in Canada should not be used to describe the experience of all Haitian migrant partners from Montreal, as it is an overgeneralization. Indeed, while Bernard's migrant partner was keen to remit equality as a social norm – he may have learned from his life in Montreal or elsewhere – other gay nonmigrants expressed that some migrant partners sought to reproduce the same unequal gender role in their relationships with nonmigrants. Sometimes, this produced tensions, contradictions, and conflicts in nonmigrants' intimate relationships with migrants. A thirty-five-year-old MSM research participant illustrated this tension and conflict with the following:

> "They [Migrant partners] always think that they own you. They want you to be submissive. They always want to boss you around. They always call you on the phone and ask you where you are and what you are doing."

This research participant had a three-month relationship with a migrant partner from Montreal as well. This shows that it may be dangerous to generalize the origin country of social remittances. In other words, the migrants' origin country does not determine whether they will remit positive or negative social remittances in their transnational relationships with nonmigrants. For instance, while some migrant partners from the United States, such as Kelly's partner, may have remitted positive social remittances to their nonmigrant partners. Other migrant partners from the United States are seriously criticized by some nonmigrants in Haiti, who perceive them as exploitative. In this sense, a twenty-three-year-old gay research participant expressed: "The only negative thing about migrants seeking intimate relationships with people here is that some ask people here to send too many photos and videos and then block them after they receive them. They suffer from that a lot here."

A twenty-eight-year-old bisexual research participant shared with me during an interview that he knew a group of Haitian migrants whose only goal was to come to Haiti to organize orgies with young nonmigrants in Northern Haiti so that they could post pictures and videos on Facebook or Instagram. He said: "Whenever they have a problem with these young guys, they post photos and

videos to tarnish their reputation." These were some of the negative aspects of social remittances that Haitian migrants shared with nonmigrants through their same-sex intimate transnational relationships. As these two research participants later explained, these were bad behaviours that young nonmigrants learnt from migrants, which they might replicate in their relationships with other gay men in Northern Haiti.

Gay Rights as a Political Remittance in Same-sex Transnational Relationships

In addition to socio-cultural norms around gender and sexuality, some migrants remit to their nonmigrant partners political ideas and strategies about fighting for gay rights in Northern Haiti. The migrants who did so are generally those who are already out in the Haitian diaspora. For instance, Bernard's partner shared his vision of political activism for gay rights in Haiti with him. As Bernard told me once, his migrant partner's dream and goal is for gay men to enjoy the same equal rights in Haiti as heterosexual men. For that to happen, gay men in Haiti should fight for it. He told Bernard that one of the ways to do so is to educate the population about different gender and sexual identities and norms. He believed that if people in Northern Haiti understood that human sexuality is a spectrum, they would be less discriminatory against LGBTQ+ people in Haiti. Via education, he thought that people could become less homophobic. Another strategy he thought gay men in Northern Haiti should use to fight for gay rights is to take the risk and come out. He told Bernard that the more Haitian gay men come out of the closet and assume their sexuality, the more people would be forced to reckon with the reality of sexual diversity.

Furthermore, he told Bernard that some gay men from the Haitian diaspora, such as Ziggy in Montréal and Tatie Mendel, are great examples of what other gay men in Northern Haiti should do. Ziggy and Tatite Mendel are two Haitian gay men who openly talk about their sexuality on YouTube, Facebook, Tik Tok, and Instagram. Ziggy had emigrated from Haiti to Montreal, whereas Tatie

Mandel has emigrated to New York. They are followed by thousands of people in Haiti and the Haitian diaspora. For instance, Tatie Mendel's Instagram account is followed by 228,000 people. He is married to a Jamaican Black man and often shares his marital life and other adventures with his followers. Ziggy and Tatie Mendel are both engaged in what I refer to as the politics of gay visibility in the Haitian transnational social space.

As immigrants in Canada and the United States, they use existing politics of visibility (Gray 2009; Reynolds 2013; Woodward 2015; Waite and Denier 2019; Brock and Edenborg 2020) in these countries to create a queer space in the Haitian media and social media landscape to share their experience as Haitian gay men, while challenging preconceived notions that homosexual identity and behaviours should remain as taboo or should be seen as a malediction in Haitian society. By publicly sharing their coming out stories and their experience negotiating their homosexual identity and practices while navigating transnational family and community relationships in Haiti and North America, Ziggy and Tatie Mendel use prevailing socio-cultural norms around LGBTQ+ politics of visibility in Canada and the United States to respond to the attempt by some Haitian politicians and religious leaders to render LGBTQI-identified Haitians invisible in their homeland.

According to Bernard, his migrant partner sees these two men as models that LGBTQ+ nonmigrants could use to engage in political mobilization for gay rights in Northern Haiti. While Bernard understood his migrant partner's good intentions, he also thought that it would be difficult to be openly gay the way that Ziggy and Tatie Mendel are on social media. Bernard explained to me that both Ziggy and Tatie Mendel live in the Haitian diaspora, where pro-LGBTQ+ laws protect them. Both have stable jobs in Canada and the United States, which allow them to live independently from their family members. Even though their family members might be homophobic or try to discriminate against them, they still have the resources to survive on their own. In Northern Haiti, the situation is different for gay men. Many of them live a double precarity. They are precarious because of Haiti's

general economic precarity and because of their gender and sexual orientation as gay men. From this perspective, it would be challenging for them to engage in the politics of gay visibility that Ziggy, Tatie Mendel, and his own partner promote.

Moreover, Bernard explained that when Ziggy and Tatie Mendel come to Haiti, they often stay for short periods of time because they know how homophobic people can be in the country. Even his migrant partner never stays in Haiti for more than one month, and when he is in Northern Haiti, he rents a place far away from the population's gaze so he can live his homosexuality with Bernard with peace of mind. In this sense, remitting the politics of gay visibility from North America to nonmigrants in Northern Haiti as political skill and strategy conflicts with the social and political reality of postcolonial homophobia in the homeland.

Many nonmigrants cannot afford to live independently and rely on their family for their socioeconomic survival. Even those involved in same-sex intimate transnational relationships with migrant partners maintain good relationships with their family members and kinship networks as a safety net in case their intimate cross-border relationships end. In a context of socioeconomic precarity, political instability, and postcolonial homophobia, the politics of gay visibility is not nonmigrants' immediate concern, as they are more preoccupied with surviving every day and one day at a time.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the meanings of same-sex intimate transnational relationships for nonmigrants in Northern Haiti. Second, I analyzed how the remittances they receive from migrants across the Haitian diaspora shape their relationships with their intimate partners, family members, coworkers, neighbours, and the local community in Northern Haiti. Third, I examined how they negotiate economic, social, and political remittances in the often-heteronormative context of their family and the local community in Northern Haiti while navigating same-sex intimate transnational

relationships with Haitian migrant partners. In doing so, I discussed my main finding, which argued that homosexuality is a dimension of power that shapes and organizes the circulation of money, socio-cultural norms, and political ideas among gay migrants and nonmigrants across the Haitian transnational social space.

While these same-sex intimate relationships seem mutually beneficial for the parties involved and represent a transnational refuge for nonmigrants in the context of socioeconomic precarity and postcolonial homophobia in Northern Haiti, this chapter revealed that significant tensions, contradictions, and conflicts shape how nonmigrants negotiate economic, social, and political remittances in the heteronormative context of their family, kinships, friendship networks, and the local community in Northern Haiti. Additionally, this chapter revealed how socioeconomic inequality intersects with homophobia in Northern Haiti to shape how nonmigrants navigate their intimate cross-border relationships with migrant partners across the Haitian transnational social space.

As such, this chapter contributes to the literature on transnationalism by providing empirical evidence of how nonmigrants navigate economic, social, and political remittances in same-sex intimate transnational relationships. Doing so adds to our understanding of what transnationalism and same-sex intimacy mean to migrants and nonmigrants in a context of socioeconomic precarity. Furthermore, it contributes to the transnational migration field by emphasizing nonmigrants' perspectives and experiences of the transnational ties that migrants develop and sustain with them.

Additionally, this chapter contributes to the field of sexualities by showing how Black gay men remit gender and sexual norms and transnational gay rights from Canada and the United States to Haiti. It shows how such sociocultural norms can create tensions, contradictions, and conflicts in men's same-sex intimate transnational relationships. Finally, this chapter shows the limits of Western politics on gay visibility in non-Western contexts, such as Northern Haiti, where socioeconomic

precarity and homophobia affect the kind of political activism gay men can afford and engage with in their lives.

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CHAPTER VI

LIFE PROJECTS IN SAME-SEX INTIMATE TRANSNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

In this chapter, I will examine how homosexual identity and practices intersect with transnational space and socioeconomic inequality to enable or inhibit the sustainability of same-sex intimate cross-border relationships among Haitian nonmigrants and migrants over time. In doing so, I will analyze how Haitian nonmigrants formed life projects with their migrant partners and how these projects shaped their lives in the socioeconomic and political context of Northern Haiti during my fieldwork in 2020-2021. The main finding I will discuss in this chapter is that homosexuality is a dimension of power that intersects with transnational space and socioeconomic inequality to shape nonmigrants' life projects with their migrant partners in Northern Haiti and the Haitian diaspora. As I will show in the following sections, this has significant implications for our socio-geographic understanding of how homosexual identity and practices shape transnational intimacy between migrants and nonmigrants, as well as nonmigrants' projects of migration and mobility in a context of socioeconomic precarity and homophobia.

Life Projects in Same-sex Intimate Transnational Relationships

My research participants defined their 'life projects' (*projets de vie* in French) as any projects they could build with their migrant partners during their intimate transnational relationships, which determined whether they would stay together over a long period of time or end their relationships after a few months or years. Nonmigrants formed life projects with their migrant partners depending on whether nonmigrants were involved in long-term, short-term, and short-term that could lead to long-term same-sex intimate transnational relationships. As such, nonmigrants' life projects were shaped by the types, length, and intensity of their intimate cross-border relationships with their migrant partners.

Life Projects in Long-term Intimate Transnational Relationships

Josué, the thirty-one-year-old gay research participant I mentioned in the introduction, left Northern Haiti for Montreal in June 2023. To do so, his migrant partner had applied five months before his trip for a Canadian visitor visa on the website of Immigration Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) so that he could join him in Montreal. His migrant partner received an email notification from IRCC stating that Josué's visa was approved, and he needed to travel from Cap Haitian to Port-au-Prince, the Capital City of Haiti, where the Canadian Embassy is located, to give his fingerprints and leave his passport so he could receive his visa. His migrant partner funded his trip to Port-au-Prince by transferring money to him from Montreal. When he received his Canadian visitor visa, his migrant partner also funded his trip to Montreal.

The day before his travel, he organized a going-away party for his friends in Northern Haiti, where they ate, drank alcohol, and danced to celebrate his departure from Northern Haiti. His friends congratulated him for his trip to Montreal, which they perceived as an achievement. They told Josué that he was on his way to becoming a *dyaspora*. I learned about Josué's Montreal trip through Henry, my fieldwork's principal informant in Northern Haiti, with whom I have kept in touch sporadically to discuss what goes on in Cap Haitian. Henry is a close friend of Josué and attended his departure party in June 2023.

I was surprised that Josué had travelled to Montreal because he was in a five-year relationship with a migrant partner in New York when I interviewed him at the end of 2021. Although during my interview with him, he had expressed interest in Canada as one of the countries he thought where he could migrate to because of Canadian public policy protecting LGBTQ+ people, I had assumed that he would be joining his migrant partner in New York at any point instead of travelling to any other pole of the Haitian diaspora. However, Josué made a completely different mobility decision that could eventually lead to him permanently migrating to Canada.

I asked Henry how and why this happened, and he told me that Josué broke up with his New York-based Haitian migrant partner in 2022 and met another Haitian migrant through his gay friendship network in Montreal the same year. They had been involved in what seemed to Henry as a passionate relationship, during which his migrant partner from Montreal visited him several times in Northern Haiti. They also vacationed in Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic in December 2022 for Christmas and New Year's Eve. After their Punta Cana trip, Josué's migrant partner proposed to apply for a Canadian visitor visa to join him in Montreal. Josué accepted his partner's proposition and received regular money transfers from him to deposit in his Haitian bank account to show the Canadian Embassy that he had enough means to care for himself during his trip there.

While many nonmigrants in Haiti unsuccessfully apply for a Canadian visa yearly, Josué's situation qualified him to receive a Canadian visitor visa. Indeed, when he applied for the visa, he already had a white-collar job in Northern Haiti, which he had found through a gay friend in Cap Haitian. Having a good job is one of the requirements to potentially qualify for a visitor visa in Canada. Indeed, having a good job can show the visa officer that the applicant has a good economic situation (Satzewich 2015), so they would not be interested in overstaying their visa to reside in Canada illegally or to drain the country's social assistance. However, in addition to Josué's Haitian bank statements and employment letter, Henry told me that Josué's partner also included his Canadian bank statements in Josue's application so that he could have a better chance of getting his visa approved by the officer. Throughout Josué's visa application process, his migrant partner from Montreal guided and advised him on how to organize his paperwork, and they were both happy and satisfied that Josué received the visa.

Soon after, Josué's migrant partner booked his plane tickets from Cap Haitian to Port-au-Prince, where there is a direct Air Transat flight to Montreal three days a week. While Josué's visa allowed him to stay for up to six months in Montreal during one visit, he was unsure whether he

would return to Cap Haitian. Even though he had a good job in Cap Haitian, Henry told me that Haiti's socioeconomic precarity and political instability made him question whether he should return there or file for asylum based on persecution because of his sexual orientation in Haiti. Applying for asylum might be a better and faster way for him to stay in Canada to work legally and, perhaps, to further his education. Because of his low education level – he completed a two-year technical diploma in Haiti – Josué would not have easily qualified for permanent residency as an economic immigrant in Canada through the points system.

Indeed, he would have needed to show the case officer that he fluently speaks French or English or both by taking certified tests, and that he has some post-secondary education, a good job, some savings, and a clear background check to meet the basic requirements to be issued an invitation from Canada's Express Entry pool[40]. After he submitted his immigration application from Haiti, it could have taken him from nine months to two years to get his application approved and receive a visa before he could make plans to land in Canada as a permanent resident. Because of these hurdles, Henry told me that Josué was seriously considering staying in Montreal. As he is already there, applying for asylum would be easier and would allow him to work legally and make some money while his case is being processed. When I wrote this chapter, Josué was still in Montreal and had not decided what he would do for his life project with his migrant partner.

Josué's situation and how his life projects have changed over the course of a year and a half is remarkable in many ways. Of all the research participants I met and interviewed during my fieldwork in Northern Haiti, Josué seemed the luckiest. He seemed to have no problem moving from one same-sex intimate transnational relationship with a Haitian migrant partner to another. He regularly received remittances from his migrant partners, which allowed him to survive while he did not work for years

[40] "Apply for permanent residence: Express Entry". Information accessible on the Government of Canada website for Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Services. Accessed on June 27th, 2023. Retriable here: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/express-entry/apply-permanent-residence.html

in Northern Haiti. He constantly travelled to the Dominican Republic to vacation with his partners coming mainly from the United States and Canada. In addition, he had the means to rent an apartment in a middle-class neighbourhood on the periphery of Cap Haitian, which he shared with his gay friends. He financially supported his friends and family members when they needed him. His friends often solicited him to help them navigate their same-sex intimate transnational relationships with migrants across the Haitian diaspora.

While Josué was lucky to find migrant partners who supported him in his life projects in Northern Haiti, not all my research participants had a similar fate in their long-term same-sex intimate cross-border relationships with migrant partners. Many nonmigrants who were involved in long-term relationships with migrant partners expressed fatigue due to the long-distance aspect of their relationships. In this sense, even though they could eventually elaborate migration and/or mobility projects with their partners, they were not patient enough to wait for these projects to materialize. For instance, a twenty-six-year-old pansexual research participant illustrated how long distance affected his relationship with his partner with the following:

> "It's [long distance] what makes me suffer the most in a relationship with a dyaspora [migrant] because the distance affects me in the way I conceive a relationship. Because I am very sensitive, I like people. If, for example, I had the means and could go to the USA, that would not be a problem because I could choose… I must wait until he has time and can come. But it hurts [I suffer] because he is the only one who can do it [travel to Haiti to see him]. Because I need the relationship at the same level. If it's Sunday, we can spend the time together. If he were close, like in the Dominican Republic, I would go see him, for example, because I can travel to Santo Domingo. I only need to pay the entry fee. If he was in Europe, I could also pay for the ticket and go because I have permanent residence in Spain. But I do not have a US visa to travel there. So…"

As this research participant explained, travelling to the United States, where his migrant partner lived, was impossible for him while he was in an intimate transnational relationship with him. This created some power imbalance in their relationship because the migrant partner was the only one who could travel and come to see him in Northern Haiti. Therefore, even though he could have achieved a similar outcome as Josué in his life project with his migrant partner, the long-distance aspect of their

relationship affected his chance to materialize such a project. Therefore, ending his relationship with his migrant partner became the only solution to his long-distance problem. When I asked him why the long distance was so challenging for him while other research participants seemed to deal with it seamlessly, he replied as follows:

> "I like to live with my partner [in the same household and city]. Because I like to live in a home. I like my partner to kiss me. Since I was a child, I have liked living in a home. I love for my partner to kiss my feet and all my body. When I return home [after a day of work], we can prepare dinner together and drink tea while watching TV, for example. In this sense, long distance is negative because I suffer a lot. I often want to do activities with my partner, but I can't. Unfortunately, it is not possible."

Like this research participant, many other gay nonmigrants in Northern Haiti expressed facing the same challenge in their intimate long-term transnational relationships with migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora. Many said they were happy to meet migrant partners with whom they could envision building a life together. However, the difficulty of sustaining a long-distance long-term relationship, where they must rely on a smartphone and messaging applications, such as WhatsApp, to communicate with their partners regularly, was overwhelming. As a result, their intimate cross-border relationships did not stand the test of time.

Some of them used different strategies to try to make their relationships work. For instance, some nonmigrants opened their relationships to have casual sex with other men in Northern Haiti while their migrant partners were in the Haitian diaspora. In this vein, one of my research participants told me, "*Se san k'ap koule nan vèn mwen* [I have blood in my veins]." This meant to convey that he needed to have sex regularly to feel 'good.' That's why he needed to be in an open relationship with his migrant partner while he was overseas. Other participants told me they waited up to five or six months before opening their relationships to the idea of having sex with other men. However, they realized that they had to have casual sex with other men in Northern Haiti if they wanted their intimate long-term transnational relationships to survive with migrant partners who lived thousands of

kilometres away from them. This shows the limit of the Haitian homosexual transnational space for gay migrants and nonmigrants to sustain long-term intimate cross-border relationships.

While the Haitian homosexual transnational space allows migrants and nonmigrants to connect virtually or physically to develop intimate cross-border relationships, long distance, socioeconomic inequality, and the inaccessibility of visas to travel from Northern Haiti to visit or move in with migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora affect the longevity of these long-term relationships. As such, nonmigrants are frustrated about the non-materialization of their life projects with their migrant partners. This finding is a significant contribution to the literature on diaspora, transnationalism, and homosexuality, which does not often consider how socioeconomic inequality and long-distance affect same-sex intimate transnational relationships among migrants and nonmigrants.

Indeed, scholarship on transnationalism shows that certain tensions, conflicts, and power struggles may emerge because of economic inequality that shapes the ties that migrants who live in higher-resource countries develop and maintain with nonmigrants living in low-resource communities in the homeland (Goldring 1998; Levitt 2001; Carling 2008; Baldassar et al. 2014). They often analyze such tensions in the context of heteronormative families and kinships in which socioeconomic status and gender shape transnational parenthood and gender relations among migrants and nonmigrants. In this sense, they have overlooked how such tensions, conflicts, and power struggles play out in the case of same-sex intimate transnational relationships among migrants and nonmigrants.

From this perspective, my research illustrates specific situations in which migrants and nonmigrants deal with and navigate conflicts and power struggles in their same-sex intimate transnational relationships. In doing so, I show that in addition to socioeconomic inequality, long distance and the inaccessibility of visas are two important factors of inequality that shape same-sex intimate cross-border relationships among migrants and nonmigrants. As such, same-sex intimacy

provides a significant lens to examine and understand how inequality shapes migrant-nonmigrant transnational ties.

Furthermore, my research contributes to the literature on sexualities by showing how long-distance and the inaccessibility of visas shape gay nonmigrants' migration/mobility projects across transnational social spaces. This adds to queer/sexual migration scholarships (Cantú 2009; Carrillo 2017; Tamagawa 2020; Murray 2020), which do not often examine how long-distance and unaffordable visas affect gay men's migration and mobility projects from homophobic societies to countries where the law protects LGBTQ+ people. Indeed, while the literature on sexual migration often focuses on how sexuality and inequality shape LGBTQ+ people's migration and integration processes in the Global North, they often understudy how LGBTQ+ people's migration and mobility projects and their desire to be closer to their partners may be constrained by geopolitical factors and global migration regulation that determine who gets granted a visa to visit migrant partners' residence countries, such as the United States, Canada, France, Brazil, Chile, or the Dominican Republic.

Life Projects in Short-term to Long-term Intimate Transnational Relationships

As stated above, the short-term same-sex intimate cross-border relationships that nonmigrants in Northern Haiti develop and sustain with Haitian migrants can be categorized into two groups: the short-term relationships that could potentially lead to long-term relationships and the short-term relationships that ended after a maximum of three months. As explained in my methodology chapter, some nonmigrants experienced these short-term relationships as sex work before and while Haitian migrants were physically in Northern Haiti, and they ended shortly after migrants left Haiti to return to their country of residence across the Haitian diaspora.

Many nonmigrants who were involved in short-term intimate cross-border relationships that could lead to long-term intimate relationships focused on receiving economic and social remittances

from Haitian migrants while they figured out whether these relationships would last longer. For instance, a thirty-year-old gay research participant illustrated this with the following:

> "He [migrant partner] is someone who *really* understands me. He mentors me. He helps me out a lot. If this continues, I think we will live well together. Remember I told you that one of my projects is to build a retirement centre for people like him in Haiti? So, I think he could help me with that."

Here, this research participant expressed his desire to continue developing his same-sex intimate cross-border relationship with his Haitian migrant partner in the long term. During my interview with him, he had only been involved in an intimate cross-border relationship with his migrant partner for a few months. They met on Facebook but had not met in person yet. Therefore, it was unclear to him whether the relationship would last longer or end soon. He perceived sustaining a long-term intimate cross-border relationship with him as a potentially positive life project because of the economic and social remittances that he received from his migrant partner. In a sense, it would be a 'dream' come true for him to sustain a long-term intimate relationship with his migrant partner, who seemed to be an ideal romantic partner in his life in Northern Haiti.

A twenty-three-year-old research participant who identified as bisexual stated: "I mean, if he continues to back me up (take care of me financially), that is not a problem, I will stay with him." When I asked him to elaborate on that, he added: "Well, if you are in a difficult financial situation, and you find someone who is helping you, it is not a problem to have gay sex with them." From this research participant's perspective, he can envision sustaining a long-term intimate relationship with his migrant partner only if he continues sending him money. As such, he comfortably is selling same-sex intimacy for money (Kempadoo 1999, 2004; Zelizer 2000; Parreñas 2020). From this perspective, his potential long-term intimate relationship with his migrant partner is contingent on the economic remittances that he can continue receiving from him in the future.

In the same vein, Steven, the twenty-year-old bisexual research participant I mentioned in chapter five, stated when I asked him what kinds of projects he was developing with his Haitian migrant partner:

> "Perhaps, he has projects with me for the future. However, I don't have any projects with him. I would love to stay with my boyfriend [in Northern Haiti] and do everything with him in the future.
> - Would you join him if he invited you to live with him in New York?
> Well, I don't think any Haitian who would have the opportunity to leave Haiti would reject it. So, I would accept, but I would go under certain conditions. I will not do it if I must go live with him in the same house. You know because I would not want to live in a country where I don't speak the language. The person would be able to manipulate me more. *Si li di m kouri, fok mwen ta kouri* [if he tells me to do something, I will have to do it]. Even though leaving Haiti would be good for me, but I would not go to the US to live with someone I do not know. I would also consider going if I could work to help my family and my boyfriend. I would not go because he is not someone I truly love."

As discussed in chapter five, Steven was in a parallel long-term romantic relationship with his boyfriend in Northern Haiti when he developed a same-sex intimate cross-border relationship with a Haitian migrant who lived in the United States. He had been with the migrant partner only for a few months. Steven's migrant partner has supported him by paying tuition fees, among other things. He had come to Northern Haiti to meet him during their short-term intimate transnational relationship. While Steven was happily enjoying the economic remittances he received from his migrant partner, he was not thrilled to leave his boyfriend in Northern Haiti to pursue a relationship with his migrant partner. Nonetheless, he did not foresee ending this intimate transnational relationship with his migrant partner either. If the relationship continued serving his economic interests, he would sustain it while sharing an apartment with his boyfriend in Northern Haiti.

Steven's situation is interesting in many ways. First, it nuances post-colonial homophobic discourses in Northern Haiti, according to which money is the sole reason gay nonmigrants are involved in intimate transnational relationships with Haitian migrants. While money is the reason why Steven has sustained this same-sex intimate transnational relationship with his migrant partner as he maintains a parallel romantic relationship with his boyfriend in Haiti, he did not perceive money as a

good-enough reason for him to end his romantic relationship with his Northern Haitian boyfriend to move to the United States and live with somebody he did not really know or in a country where he had never been before.

Second, Steven's situation can also serve to nuance some Western media discourses about migration from poor countries. Indeed, while he would consider migrating from Northern Haiti as many Haitians would, he stated that he would not jump on the opportunity to leave his boyfriend and his homeland to migrate to the United States. Although he may change his mind if he is presented with a concrete migration plan from Haiti in the future, given the country's socioeconomic precarity and political instability, his situation invites reflection of what factors nonmigrants consider before making a drastic decision to move from their homeland to a Western host country. Indeed, beyond money, nonmigrants may be contemplating a plethora of reasons as to why they should migrate from or stay in their homeland.

Life Projects in Short-term Same-sex Intimate Transnational Relationships

Many nonmigrants in Northern Haiti who were involved in short-term same-sex intimate transnational relationships with migrants across the Haitian diaspora expressed frustration, disillusion, disappointment, and deception regarding their life projects with their partners. Many developed these relationships with the illusion that their migrant partners would either send them regular remittances to care for them or would eventually sponsor them to emigrate from Northern Haiti to the country where their partners reside in the Haitian diaspora. However, some nonmigrants were frustrated and disappointed that such projects could not materialize. For instance, a forty-seven-year-old bisexual research participant involved in a three-month same-sex intimate relationship with a Haitian migrant partner expressed his frustration when his migrant partner promised things that he did not deliver:

> "He asked me how he could help me. But it's a lie. I would say that sixty percent of what these migrants share in these long-distance relationships

> are lies. For example, the guy may tell you that he is ready to help you out of a difficult situation. Then, he may not deliver on his promises."

This nonmigrant was visibly disappointed and frustrated while recounting his experience with his migrant partner during my interview with him. He felt deceived by his migrant partner, whom he had met three months before the interview. When I asked him how they met. He told me they met in an upper-middle-class neighbourhood in Northern Haiti where he worked his shift as a security guard. The migrant approached him and started chatting with him. Soon after, he expressed a romantic interest in him. Initially, he was not interested in the migrant. However, the more they talked to each other, the more he realized they had similar life experiences as they were close in age. The migrant was forty-six years old, and the nonmigrant was forty-seven. They were both married to women before engaging in intimate relationships with other men, which was one of the points over which they bonded during their conversation.

After their initial conversation, they exchanged phone numbers to keep in touch. As the Haitian migrant was still in Northern Haiti for a few more weeks, they started seeing each other without having sex. They often spent time chatting or drinking in bars near the neighbourhood where the nonmigrant partner worked. They had sex before the migrant returned to Miami, where he resided. Soon after their intimate relationship, the migrant asked him how he could help. The nonmigrant told him he could help with whatever he needed because his situation was precarious. Even with his security guard job, he could not make ends meet. The migrant promised to help him, but he never did. The nonmigrant kept waiting on some money transfers the migrant partner had promised him but never arrived. The migrant continued making weekly excuses about why he had not yet transferred the money. After a few weeks, the nonmigrant realized that the migrant would never transfer any money, so he stopped asking.

This situation significantly shaped how he perceived intimate relationships with Haitian migrants afterwards. Although he was still intimately involved with his migrant partner when I

interviewed him, he told me that he had lost all faith in that relationship. He perceived Haitian migrants as people who develop intimate relationships with nonmigrants in Northern Haiti only to lie to them. Many other nonmigrants in Northern Haiti expressed similar opinions on their short-term same-sex intimate cross-border relationship with Haitian migrants. Contrary to nonmigrants who were in long-term same-sex intimate transnational relationships with Haitian migrants, theirs did not work out. It is difficult to grasp what made some short-term relationships develop into long-term versus those which ended after three months. While some of my research participants told me they used different strategies to keep migrants interested in them so that their relationships could live longer, others recounted that they used similar strategies, and they still did not work out.

For instance, some research participants said that they abstained from having too much sex or having sex at all with migrants while they were in Haiti so that they could keep them interested in them when they returned to their countries of residence across the Haitian diaspora. Others said that they took their time sorting out who would be a good long-distance romantic partner by taking the time to get to know them very well before developing feelings for them. Thus, they chatted with them significantly and video-called them on WhatsApp. Others shared with me that they did not ask Haitian migrants for money at the beginning of their same-sex intimate cross-border relationships to not show they were desperate for migrants' money. They understood that if they started asking migrants for money from the first day of their relationships, they would not take them seriously or be interested in pursuing a long-term intimate transnational relationship with them.

Nonmigrants who could not transform their short-term intimate relationships into long-term ones said that they used similar strategies. However, they thought they were not lucky enough to meet the right kind of migrants to develop and sustain long-term same-sex intimate relationships. Most Haitian migrants they met were more interested in having sex with them when they visited Northern Haiti instead of investing time in developing long-term intimate relationships with them. Some

nonmigrants who had experienced some short-term relationships with other Haitian migrants thought that Haitian migrants would do anything, including lying and deceiving nonmigrants in Northern Haiti, to develop short-term intimate relationships with them before coming to Haiti and end them shortly after leaving the country. For instance, a twenty-two-year-old gay nonmigrant and a twenty-eight-year-old bisexual research participant stated in this regard:

> "I mean, I never fell in love with a dyaspora because most are not interested in a serious romantic relationship. Most of my friends suffer a lot here. After they fall in love with a migrant, they realize that the migrant was with them only for sexual pleasure. So, their experience made me decide not to fall in love with migrants again."

> "I know another group of gay diasporas whose only goal is to come to Haiti to organize orgies with young guys here so that they can publish pictures and videos on Facebook or Instagram."

These unflattering descriptions of Haitian migrants seem not only to resonate with gay men's experiences but also with heterosexual nonmigrants who are involved in intimate cross-border relationships with migrants across the Haitian diaspora. As discussed in chapter three, in the summer of 2020, Haitian migrants were at the forefront of a sex scandal because some migrants from Haitian communities in Canada and the United States returned to the country to 'organize orgies' in a famous hotel of Port-au-Prince, the capital city of Haiti. Photos and videos of such orgies were leaked on social media and shared on WhatsApp, causing an uproar on the Caribbean Island. Many radio and TV commentators, religious leaders, and political figures used this scandal to criticize Haitian migrants, whom they saw as using their money to corrupt good mores and family values in the country.

As they put it, migrants' higher economic resources were the reason why they could pervert traditional family values in their homeland. They firmly condemned such sexual behaviours. Later in November 2021, a group of gay Haitian migrants who were visiting their nonmigrant partners in Northern Haiti received similar critiques as they were spotted in tourist spots with some men in Northern Haiti, whom the general population perceived as 'straight men who were forced to engage in intimate relationships' with Haitian migrants because of their money. Many nonmigrants in

Northern Haiti were outed on social media and WhatsApp group messages because of their same-sex intimate relationships with migrants. As such, Haitian migrants were perceived as perverting sexual morality and gender norms in the country. While orgies had certainly been organized in Haiti before the 2020 and 2021 sex scandals involving straight and gay migrants, the main criticism against migrants was that they were using their higher economic resources to negatively affect sexual morality in the country.

Interestingly, these criticisms only target Haitian migrants and nonmigrants who engaged in short-term intimate relationships while migrants were visiting Haiti. The long-term relationships, where migrants may use their higher resources to shape how intimacy is experienced in Haiti, seem never to be the object of criticism. It seems that nonmigrants in Haiti blissfully ignore long-term intimate relationships among migrants and nonmigrants if the former provides the latter with regular remittances. From this perspective, some nonmigrants who expressed frustration and disappointment from their same-sex intimate transnational relationships with migrants may also blissfully ignore the kind of disappointment and deception they may face in their relationships with Haitian migrants if they regularly receive economic remittances from them.

In this sense, a twenty-eight-year-old gay nonmigrant who was involved in a short-term relationship with a Haitian migrant told me during an interview that he was disappointed with his migrant partner, who did not ask him on a regular basis whether he needed 'something.' Here, something meant money. He explained that during his relationship with the migrant, he only transferred fifty US dollars to him and never asked later whether he needed more money. When I asked him whether he explicitly asked the Haitian migrant for money. He responded that he should not be the one asking the Haitian migrant for money. Instead, his migrant partner should understand that he 'left someone in Haiti' whom he should care for. Intrigued by his statement, I asked him to elaborate more on it. He told me that he perceived his relationship with his Haitian migrant partner

as *yon mari ki kite madanm ni an Ayiti* [It is like a husband who left his wife in Haiti]. As such, the Haitian husband who moved overseas to pursue better economic opportunities should care for his wife left behind in Haiti.

This nonmigrant's understanding of his cross-border relationship with his Haitian migrant partner is common in Northern Haiti and the rest of the country. As Glick Schiller and Fouron (2001) put it, many Haitian nonmigrants see the economic remittances that Haitian migrants send them as their moral obligation toward Haiti. As they assert, Haitian transnationalism becomes a terrain of blood and descent, i.e., nonmigrants in Haiti use the logic of blood ties and descendants of the same nation to claim remittances from family members, friends, former neighbours, or any person they might have known in Haiti before they left for countries where the Haitian diaspora has resettled. Nonmigrants who are involved in same-sex intimate cross-border relationships with Haitian migrants used similar logic to justify why they should receive remittances from their migrant partners who reside across the Haitian diaspora.

As Goldring (1998), Glick Schiller and Fouron (2001), and Carling (2008) demonstrated in the case of Mexico, Haiti, and Cape Verde, if migrants do not fulfill their obligations towards nonmigrants, they may be seen as ungrateful because they do not pay their 'debt of migration.' This means that because migration projects are costly for nationals, many co-ethnics/co-nationals sometimes contribute to funding someone else's migration journey. From this perspective, migrants are expected to repay their moral debt by helping others to migrate and helping nonmigrants who stay in their homeland. In the Haitian case, when migrants are involved in intimate transnational relationships with migrant partners, they are expected to financially help their partners to survive in the context of socioeconomic precarity, political instability, and 'vulnerable urbanization' (Milian and Tamru 2018) of Haiti.

In this sense, nonmigrants did not perceive the money they claimed from their partners as money for sex work, as others unfamiliar with the Haitian situation may be tempted to see it. They perceive such remittances as a normal obligation that any Haitian abroad should have toward Haitians in Haiti. Understanding this specific situation makes it difficult to categorize the short-term intimate cross-border relationships that Haitian nonmigrants develop with migrants from the Haitian diaspora as sex work. Also, it complicates an understanding of Haitian migrants as sex tourists in the context of Haiti. Indeed, many Haitian migrants – whom I interacted with during my fieldwork in Northern Haiti in 2020 and 2021 and others whom I have met during my regular visits to Miami, Montreal, New York, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, and the Dominican Republic, as well as during my four years of residence in Venezuela – shared with me that they understand the relationships they develop with nonmigrants in Northern Haiti as their way to help the country. They may be rationalizing their relationships with nonmigrants in Haiti, or they may genuinely think that they are helping the country. What is interesting to many nonmigrants in Haiti is that their remittances make up sixty percent of cash inflow, helping many families, kinships, and communities to survive daily in Haiti.

While these relationships structured by socioeconomic inequality can be problematic on many levels, only a deep understanding of Haiti's socio-historical, economic, geopolitical, and environmental context can allow us to grasp how money and intimacy shape the same-sex intimate cross-border relationships that Haitian migrants develop and sustain with nonmigrants. Indeed, the legacy of Haiti's colonial past and independence as the first Black independent Republic in the Western hemisphere has been shaped by isolation, economic embargo, geopolitical exclusion, and impoverishment through international aid and humanitarian missions (Seitenfus 2015; Charles 2019, 2022), which are informed by racism and shape how Haitians are treated in the Americas and the rest of the world. As carriers of this history, many Haitian migrants and nonmigrants feel *redevable* [indebted] toward each other. This

sense of indebtedness repaid through migration is similar to the case of Dominicans (Levitt 2001), Mexicans (Goldring 1998), and Cap Verdeans (Carling 2008).

As such, some Haitian migrants help nonmigrants migrate from their local community to join them in the Haitian diaspora. Others support their families and friends back home by sending annually billions of US dollars in remittances. Haitian migrants do not send such a high number of remittances because they are wealthier migrants than other nationals (Audebert 2017) but because many of them have this deep sense of indebtedness toward their families, kinships, friendship networks and their country – Haiti. It is this sense of Haitian-ness that seems to shape how many nonmigrants perceive money transactions in their same-sex intimate transnational relationships with migrants. This also contributes to the cultural and homosexual meanings they seemingly attribute to the Haitian homosexual transnational space, where they connect with men in Northern Haiti and the Haitian diaspora to develop and sustain same-sex intimate cross-border relationships.

As I discussed in chapter five, homosexuality is a dimension of power that organizes and shapes intimate transnational relationships among Haitian migrants and nonmigrants beyond the heteronormative logic of family and kinship networks but in conjunction with the idea of the Haitian nation-state as a transnational social space. Accordingly, homosexual identity and practices are mobilized by men in both Haiti and Northern Haiti as stigmatized identity and taboo practices in the post-colonial-homophobic context of the Haitian transnational social space to develop and sustain intimate transnational relationships. From this perspective, homosexuality substitutes the logic of family and kinship networks that scholars analyze as to why Haitian migrants send economic remittances to Haiti, as some of the Haitian men who are involved in same-sex intimate cross-border relationships are not married and do not have children as homosexual couples. As such, they cannot be seen as forming family units.

However, although homosexuality seems to replace the heteronormative logic of nuclear family and kinship that shapes Haitian transnational ties among migrants and nonmigrants, it does so in conjunction with many Haitians' deep understanding of their nation-state as the first Black independent Republic in the Western hemisphere that has been isolated, excluded, and impoverished. This understanding of Haiti shapes how Haitian men understand themselves as well as the same-sex intimate relationships they develop and sustain transnationally. It also shapes their understanding of the remittances nonmigrants receive from migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora.

More importantly, their understanding of homosexuality and the Haitian nation-state as contradictory but compatible shapes their life projects in their intimate transnational relationships. It is contradictory because gay migrants and nonmigrants' sexuality is stigmatized and discriminated against across the Haitian transnational social space, including Haiti and the Haitian diaspora. It is compatible because they still use the logic of the Haitian nation as a terrain of blood and descent (Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001; Audebert 2012; Audebert and Joseph 2022) that Haitian nationals use to inform their views of how migrants should treat them, meaning being economically indebted to them. Finally, nonmigrants' contradictory but compatible view of their intimate transnational relationships with Haitian migrant partners shapes not only their life projects in Northern Haiti but also their socio-spatial perceptions of migration and mobility across the Haitian diaspora.

Socio-spatial Perceptions of Life Projects in the Haitian Homosexual Transnational Space

As shown above, many factors, including long-distance, inaccessible visas and socioeconomic inequality between migrants and nonmigrants, shaped nonmigrants' life projects with their migrant partners in Northern Haiti's socioeconomic and political context. In some cases, some nonmigrants' life projects resulted in receiving remittances regularly from their migrant partners for their mobility and/or migration from Northern Haiti. In other cases, some nonmigrants' life projects were frustrated

by their perceived lack of migrants' responsiveness to either care for them by sending economic remittances or to support their mobility/migration projects outside of Northern Haiti.

While some nonmigrants expressed that the goal of their same-sex intimate transnational relationships with their migrant partners did not focus on leaving Northern Haiti, most clearly articulated that leaving the country was their ultimate life project. Even though they did not necessarily envision their relationships with their migrant partners as a way to achieve their goal of leaving Haiti, many contemplated leaving the country to either join their partners in the Haitian diaspora or simply to move to countries where LGBTQ+ lives are respected and protected by the law. In this regard, a thirty-two-year-old bisexual research participant stated:

> "Honestly, [I would want to be] anywhere but Haiti. [The U.S.] would be a better place for me to live because there is too much insecurity in Haiti. You know, you are educated and young, but you cannot find a job. I am a heavyweight/truck operator, there are no jobs for me here. When I completed my training, I wanted to apply for an internship at the Travaux Publics Transports et Communications (TPTC). They told me that I would need to pay them 7000 HTG (Haitian currency) in order to do the internship. And even though I pay them seven thousand *gourdes*, they may not have hired me to work full-time there. It is heartbreaking to be in a country like this. I don't find any encouragement to stay here. I finished my training 6 years ago and still cannot work. So, if I find a country where I can find work and respect, I prefer going there. But if they [Politicians] wanted us to stay in the country as young people, they would have created jobs for us. So, I would be happy to go everywhere as long as my rights are respected, as long as I can find a job, and as long as there is security. But I would also prefer staying in Haiti because that's where I have my family."

Here, this nonmigrant illustrates the dilemma of many Haitians who would want to stay in Haiti but are not able to do so because of the multidimensional vulnerability of life in Haiti (Audebert 2017). He wants to stay in the country, where he speaks the language and has his family. However, there are not enough opportunities for him to do so. In addition to finding a good job and a general state of security, this participant pointed out that he would like to migrate to a country where his human right as a bisexual man is respected. Respect for non-heterosexuality was a major criterion for many nonmigrants when talking about their dreams or projects to emigrate from Northern Haiti. Indeed, many nonmigrants perceived the countries where their migrant partners resided across the

Haitian diaspora as places that respect LGBTQ+ human rights. Such socio-spatial perceptions also shaped their understanding of migration and mobility from Northern Haiti.

Hence, I define nonmigrants' socio-spatial perceptions as their perceptions of Haitian diasporic countries or host societies to which they attribute specific sociocultural and homosexual meanings (Di Meo 2004, 2008; Audebert 2006; Claval 2012; Jackson 2013; Audebert and Joseph 2022) they acquired through their interactions with their migrant partners in the context of their same-sex intimate transnational relationships. This means that nonmigrants' socio-spatial perceptions of migration and mobility from Northern Haiti to the Haitian diaspora were shaped by the sociocultural and homosexual meanings they attributed to various migrant-receiving countries, including the United States, Canada, France, Brazil, Chile, and the Dominican Republic. Many nonmigrants acquired these sociocultural and homosexual meanings through their same-sex intimate cross-border relationships with Haitian migrants across the Haitian diaspora.

Nonmigrants' socio-spatial perceptions of host countries, where their migrant partners reside, were mediated by their understanding of migration as a way to escape poverty and help their nonmigrant families, kinships, and friends in Northern Haiti. From this perspective, the sociocultural meanings they attributed to the United States, Canada, France, Brazil, Chile, and the Dominican Republic are grounded in their understanding that migrating to these countries would allow them to escape poverty in Northern Haiti and eventually help their family members and friends. In Haiti's post-colonial context of socioeconomic precarity, migration is thus perceived by nonmigrants as their only solution to survive the global capitalist world economy (Wallerstein 1974; Burawoy 2021) in which countries on the periphery, like Haiti, are sources of cheap labour to centre and semi-peripheric countries.

In some situations, nonmigrants attributed different meanings to different cities within the same country. For instance, they perceived Haitian migrants who lived in New York as being wealthier

than those living in Miami. The same socio-spatial perception applied to Boston. A thirty-six-year-old research participant, who identified as straight, illustrated this with the following:

> "As people often say, New York. I would like to go to New York because I have heard that when someone is in Miami or New York, it is two different things. So, they say that people who live in New York are the ones who already have money. I think there are certain things that diaspora in New York do that those in Miami do not do. Things like "yon vi lux" [A luxurious life]. Diasporas in New York seem more luxurious than those in Florida. Those in Miami live in poverty as opposed to New York."

Here, it is interesting to see how this nonmigrant represented different scales in his socio-spatial perception of Haitian migrant life in the United States. These different scales shaped his perception of what it meant to migrate to New York versus Miami. This can potentially shape his life projects with his migrant partner in the United States.

The homosexual meanings that nonmigrants attributed to migrant-receiving countries shaped how they perceived their migration and mobility projects in Northern Haiti. Indeed, they formed their life projects of mobility and/or migration from Northern Haiti based on their perceptions of how homosexuality is experienced by LGBTQ+ people or treated legally in some migrant-receiving countries versus others. This then determines which countries they perceive as being more welcoming to them than others. In that regard, the twenty-seven-year-old transgender research participant stated the following when I asked her whether she would want to migrate to the United States:

> "- Yes, because when I watch documentaries from the US and see how people change their sex, that gives me even more desire to do so too. Sometimes, when I dress like a woman, people congratulate me, and I feel good. I feel at peace with myself. You know, sometimes I wonder why God did not give me a vagina…
> - Ok. I understand… How do you imagine Miami?
> You know, sometimes, I dream about Miami. Sometimes, I spend the day talking and chatting with my husband, and when I go to bed, I dream that I am in Miami because I feel that Miami is a beautiful place where they support people who are gay. Here, in Haiti, you must have much courage to walk in the streets. The population looks down on you. That makes you feel stressed. Overseas, it would be better to live freely.
> - If you went to the U.S., would you have more opportunities to express who you are?
> - Yes, I went on the TV show with Junior Rigolo, and I talked about that. I was so proud to do so because my husband was with me then. A lot of people hate gays, but when you spend some time talking to some people, they understand you more. However, there are other people who do not

> understand you when they see you in the streets. Dialogue can help. In each family, there is always something – there are some vagabonds, gay or lesbians."

This research participant expressed how her socio-spatial perception of migrating to the U.S. is shaped by what she saw on TV about the situation of LGBTQ+ people in the U.S. She did not only learn about U.S. laws regarding LGBTQ+ people via the media but also through her intimate cross-border relationship with her migrant partner, who supported her partner to talk about transgender issues in Haiti. However, while she dreamt about how she would want to fully transition into a 'woman' when/if she goes to the United States, her socio-spatial perception of the U.S. as a welcoming country for Black transgender people is limited by her experience watching U.S. TV shows and interacting with her Miami-based migrant partner. As many reports have shown, "Black transgender and gender nonconforming people face some of the highest levels of discrimination of all transgender people in the United States[41]". According to the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, "Since 2013, over 300 transgender and nonbinary people have been victims of fatal violence. Two-thirds (63%) of those victims have been Black transgender women[42]." From this perspective, her life project consisting of living freely as a trans woman in Miami may be hampered by the socio-political reality of stigmatization and discrimination against LGBTQ+ people in the United States.

[41]"Analysis Shows Startling Levels of Discrimination Against Black Transgender People". Article written and published by the National LGBTQ Task Force on September 16, 2011. Accessed on June 27th, 2023. Retrievable here: https://www.thetaskforce.org/news/analysis-shows-startling-levels-of-discrimination-against-black-transgender-people/

[42] "Black Americans' views on transgender and nonbinary issues". Article written by Kiana Cox for Pew Research Center. Published on February 16, 2023. Accessed on June 23rd, 2023. Retrievable here: https://www.pewresearch.org/race-ethnicity/2023/02/16/black-americans-views-on-transgender-and-nonbinary-issues/

Sociocultural and homosexual meanings of the U.S., Canada, France, Brazil, Chile, and the DR

Many nonmigrants involved in intimate transnational relationships with migrant partners across the United States perceived the U.S. as a country where Haitian migrants focused on making money by working several jobs at once to make ends meet. Given the socio-historical, economic, cultural, and political relations between the U.S. and Haiti, many nonmigrants saw the U.S. as their ultimate migration destination. A twenty-two-year-old bisexual research participant illustrated this with the following when I asked him where he would like to migrate if he were to:

> "I would perhaps go to the U.S. because I see that everybody in Haiti wants to go to the U.S. Also, I see it may be a better place for me to live."

This research participant captured a general perception of the U.S. as the country where Haitians should migrate to or travel. Another research participant, who identified as MSM and is twenty-six-year-old, captured this sentiment with the following:

> "You know, everybody here talks about the USA. It is the first power in the world. People say if someone leaves the country and you do not go to the USA, it is like you have never truly left the country. So, I would like to go to Miami. However, if I go to another country, I will do my best to survive and go to the U.S.
> - How have you learned about Miami?
> R: My friends who live there tell me about Miami. They show me photos and videos of highways and other roads in Miami. It looks so beautiful…"

Such socio-spatial perceptions of the United States as the migration goal of Haitian nonmigrants are pervasive in Northern Haiti and the rest of the country. As Cénat, Charles, and Mkembe argued, Haitians are willing to do everything to make their migration projects come true, including crossing ten countries in the Caribbean and Latin America to make it to the United States (Cénat et al. 2020). In the socio-spatial imaginary of many nonmigrants in Northern Haiti, a truly successful migrant life is one in which they succeed in the United States. In many cases, success means having a brand-new car, a big house, and money to show off to others when they come back to Haiti. Even though Haitian

migrants may work several low-paying jobs in the United States to barely make ends meet, they still see migrating to the United States as accomplishing their most important life projects.

Canada

Other nonmigrants perceived Canada as a country to study and France as a country where they could develop their sense of fashion. Additionally, they perceived Canada and France as countries where education and healthcare are accessible and more affordable than in the U.S. In this sense, the forty-seven-year-old bisexual research participant I mentioned earlier in this chapter shared with me how he perceived living in Montreal, where his partner resides, versus Haiti:

> "I imagine Montreal and Canada like any other country. There are certainly good and bad things. However, I think that the structures [institutions] that are in Montreal are not the same as in Haiti. The way you live, and work is different than in Haiti. For example, I imagine that if you are working there, you will have a good salary enough to live. This is very different from Haiti, where you work and cannot even have an important salary. Here, we work to survive. Here, the inflation rate is 98%. The salary I am making does not even cover 30% of what I need to live. So, I am not even surviving here. That's how I consider living in Montreal."

Here, this nonmigrant's social-spatial perception of Canada is limited to Montreal, where most Haitian immigrants in Canada live. Based on his conversations with his migrant partners and the photos, videos, and posts he sees on social media from Haitian migrants in Montreal, he concluded that living in Montreal may be better for him in the future. As he puts it, in Haiti, even working people cannot care for themselves with the salary they make. In this sense, their solution seems to be to leave the country for host societies where they perceive they can achieve their life projects. Interestingly, while this nonmigrant's perception of migrant life in Canada is shaped by his same-sex intimate cross-border relationship with his migrant partner, he, like many other nonmigrants, is unaware of Canadian and Quebecer politics of integration regarding Haitian migrants.

As I discussed elsewhere, since the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) government came to power in Québec in 2018, "Premier François Legault has announced his plans for immigration cuts and an open preference to attract and recruit more immigrants from France and other European

countries" (Charles 2019). While such ethno-racialized immigration plans did not exclude Haitian economic immigrants who qualified for immigration to Québec under its points system. They have impacted how Haitian asylum seekers were represented in official discourses by politicians and the right-leaning media in Quebec, whom they did not consider as legitimate refugees to grant asylum status. Someone like the forty-seven-year-old research participant would probably fall under the category of an asylum seeker in Montreal. Therefore, he would have to deal with how Haitian migrants are perceived in Québec, which could eventually affect his positive perception of Canada.

France

Many nonmigrants see France as a country with a strong currency, which positions it as one of the most desirable migration destinations for gay nonmigrants in Northern Haiti. However, they did not only refer to Metropolitan France to migrate to. Some nonmigrants mentioned French Guiana, where they could migrate from some neighbouring South American counties. In their socio-spatial imagination, France is a country where they can get their asylum applications approved because of their sexual orientation as *masisi* in Northern Haiti. Nonetheless, others are worried about migrating to France if they do not do so legally. In this regard, a twenty-four bisexual research participant states:

> "You know, as a child of a poor family, I would like to go anywhere to take care of my family. But I would like to go to these places legally because I would not want to have problems with legal papers.
> - OK! I see. Where would you like to go?
> I know a lot of Haitians like the USA. But I would like to go to European countries such as Spain, France etc. You know, the Euro is worth more in Haiti. So, that would allow me to take care of myself and my family in Haiti.
> - OK! I understand. What would push you to leave Haiti?
> You know, the insecurity in Haiti would be the main reason why I left the country. Also, to have the possibility to find a good job and to marry a man in the future. I have found several men who are interested in marrying me. I would be happy to do so in a country where that is possible. I do not know every country's habits [mores, laws, and policies], but I cannot really give a positive answer. But I heard that USA, France, French Guiana, and DR recognize gay marriage."

Here, this nonmigrant shared a common understanding of migrating to France as a solid alternative to the United States because the Euro is stronger than the U.S. dollar. In addition, he shared a common perception among gay nonmigrants in Northern Haiti that France, and especially French Guiana, is an easier place to migrate to as asylum seekers based on their sexual orientation. From this perspective, some nonmigrants perceive migrating to France as potentially providing them with two advantages. On the one hand, the perceived economic advantage of migrating to France is because of the strength of the Euro as France's national currency. On the other hand, they perceived France as a host country where they could freely express their homosexuality.

Like their socio-spatial perceptions of the U.S. and Canada, nonmigrants' perceptions of France, and especially French Guiana, are limited by what they heard from other Haitians who have made it there or through their interactions with their migrant partners. As such, they hold positive representations of life in French Guiana. However, research and several media have reported that Haitians obtain legal status in French Guiana with greater difficulty than migrants from other nationalities[43]. From this perspective, this research participant's potential life project to migrate to France may be affected by the difficulty of obtaining legal status there.

Furthermore, the experience of homosexuality in French Guiana is not as open[44] as it can be in Metropolitan cities in France, such as Paris[45]. Many young LGBTQ+ people are rejected by their families and suffer from being stigmatized in that overseas department of France. Although it is technically possible to apply for asylum in French Guiana as a member of the LGBTQ+ community,

[43] "Guyane: "Très peu d'Haïtiens demandent l'asile, ils savent que c'est mort". Article written by Charlotte Oberti and published by INFOMIGRANTS on November 4, 2020. Accessed on June 3rd, 2023. Retrievable here: https://www.infomigrants.net/fr/post/28288/guyane--tres-peu-dhaitiens-demandent-lasile-ils-savent-que-cest-mort-33

[44] "Situation et difficultés des migrant.e.s LGBT+ en Guyane". Article written by Christophe Caulier for ARDHIS and published on October 31, 2020. Accessed on June 22nd, 2023. Retrievable here: https://ardhis.org/situation-et-difficultes-des-migrant%C2%B7e%C2%B7s-lgbt-en-guyane/

[45] "En Guyane, la souffrance de jeunes LGBT, rejetés par leur famille". Article written by Laurent Marot for Le Monde, published on June 19, 2018. Accessed on June 17th, 2023. Retrievable here: https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2018/06/19/en-guyane-la-souffrance-de-jeunes-lgbt-rejetes-par-leur-famille_5317593_3224.html

the everyday experience of people who are openly gay directly contradicts Northern Haitian nonmigrants' perceptions of French Guiana as a country where it is easier for them to migrate and live their homosexuality freely.

Brazil

Many nonmigrants perceived Brazil, Chile, and Dominican Republic as having weak economies and currencies compared to the U.S., Canada, and France. Therefore, these countries were the least desirable places for them to migrate to as they could not care for their family members in Haiti. In this sense, a thirty-five-year-old research participant who identified as gay and bisexual illustrated this with the following when I asked him why he did not like Brazil as a country to migrate to as his migrant partner resides there: "No, I prefer Canada or the US. So, if I had the chance to go to one of these countries, I would arrange for him [to leave Brazil] and to join me there [either the U.S. or Canada]". When I probed further, he told me that Brazil is not a place where he would feel that he had made it if he migrated there. From his socio-spatial perception of the Haitian diaspora, Brazil is not at the top of the list of desirable countries to migrate to.

This perception of Brazil as a place he would prefer avoiding if he had to migrate from Northern Haiti is new and has been adjusting to the new socioeconomic and political reality of Brazil after the World Cup and the Olympics Games respectively in 2015 and 2016. Indeed, Brazil was one of the top destinations for Haitians due to the availability of construction work in preparation for these sporting events (Audebert 2017; Audebert and Joseph 2022). However, as the Brazilian economy slowed down after 2016, Haitians could no longer make a living there. They could no longer send money back home. Therefore, Brazil became an undesirable place to migrate. In addition, there were

some episodes of racism[4647] against Haitians (Cogo 2019), which negatively shaped nonmigrants' understanding of Brazil as a migration destination.

Chile

The case of Chile is interesting as it has become one of top destinations for Haitians to migrate to in Latin America (Amode 2019; Monsalve 2020; Audebert and Joseph 2022). Over ten thousand Haitians were granted permanent residence in Chile (Audebert and Joseph 2022) out of the approximately two hundred thousand that moved to Chile between 2011 and 2018 (Amode 2019). Haitians benefitted from special immigration policies, which allowed them to enter the country without a visa after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. In 2018, the Chilean government instituted new immigration policies, establishing new visa categories, including family reunification visas that allow Haitians to travel safely and legally to Chile[48]. However, as massive numbers of Venezuelans have moved to Chile because of the humanitarian and sociopolitical crisis in Venezuela, numerous Haitians who have made their way to Santiago, Chile, have found it difficult to find employment to care for themselves there and their family members and friends in Haiti.

This situation contributed to negatively affect nonmigrants' socio-spatial perceptions of Chile as one of the poles of the Haitian diaspora. As such, gay nonmigrants in Northern Haiti perceived it as a country where Haitian migrants struggle to make a living. One research participant told me during my interview with him that he was the one sending money to his migrant partner in Santiago, Chile because his situation was very precarious there. His migrant partner had not worked in months. As he

[46] "How Haitian migrants are treated shows the ties between racism and refugee policy" Article written by Luisa Farah Schwartzman for The Conversation. Published on June 8, 2022, and retrievable here: https://theconversation.com/how-haitian-migrants-are-treated-shows-the-ties-between-racism-and-refugee-policy-183892

[47] "Discrimination and Marginalisation against Haitian migrants in the Americas". Article written by Aimara Pujadas Clavel for CIGJ positions and opinions. Published December 6, 2021. Retrieved from here: https://www.gicj.org/positions-opinons/gicj-positions-and-opinions/2329-the-odyssey-of-haitian-migrants-in-the-americas-discrimination,-marginalization-and-human-rights-violations

[48] "IOM supports New Legal Pathway for Haitians in Chile". Article written by Emily Bauman at IOM Haiti. Published on August 29, 2018. Retrieved on July 1st, 2023, from here: https://haiti.iom.int/news/iom-supports-new-legal-pathway-haitians-chile

could not find any jobs there, he told his nonmigrant partner in Northern Haiti that he was considering moving back to Haiti. However, he could not even do so because he did not have enough money to pay for his flight ticket. His migrant partner in Northern Haiti promised to help him but did not have enough means either to do so. Such a situation shapes some nonmigrants' socio-spatial perception of Chile as an undesirable place to migrate to in the Haitian diaspora.

The Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic is perceived as a more accessible place for nonmigrants in Northern Haiti to develop their life projects with their migrant partners who reside in the United States, Canada, France, Brazil, and Chile. According to nonmigrants, migrant partners from the United States, Canada, and France are the ones who have the economic means to take trips to the Dominican Republic to visit their nonmigrant partners there and in Northern Haiti. Migrant partners from Brazil and Chile are often perceived as people that nonmigrants should help with their meagre income in Northern Haiti. Because of its proximity with Northern Haiti as they share a section of the Haitian border, the Dominican Republic can be understood as a third place in the Haitian migration system in the Caribbean basin (Audebert 2022). Accordingly, the Dominican Republic is a third place between migrant partners' host countries (the U.S., Canada, and France) and Northern Haiti, where their nonmigrant partners reside.

As a third place in the Haitian migration system, the Dominican Republic (DR) allows Haitian migrants and nonmigrants to meet and develop and sustain same-sex intimate transnational relationships. Because of its tolerance of homosexuality, the DR is perceived by many gay nonmigrants as a better place to experience their homosexuality than in Haiti. A twenty-two-year-old gay research participant illustrated this view with the following:

> "In comparison to Haiti, the DR is a better country. I feel that it is a country where I can live freely because they discriminate less against gay people, they insult you less. So, I think I can live there better. So, if I live there with my boyfriend, I will have a better and more open relationship."

As I discussed above, many Haitian migrant partners travelled to the DR to meet new partners or go on vacation there. They prefer the DR over Haiti not only because of its tolerance of homosexuality but also because the DR has better infrastructure than Haiti. In the DR, there is electricity, running water, gas, and other basic commodities to which migrants from the U.S., Canada, France, Brazil, and Chile are accustomed. In addition, there are some good hospitals where they can go if they have a health problem. The country feels safer than Haiti. The DR has thus replaced Haiti as a vacation destination for many Haitian migrants due to criminal gang crises in Port-au-Prince, where gangs control major areas of the capital city. Even though many Haitian migrants and nonmigrants are aware of racism against Haitians in the DR, they still enjoy the DR as an alternative to Haiti.

Plus, the Dominican peso is significantly weaker than U.S., Canadian, or French currencies, allowing migrant partners to have a 'good time' with their nonmigrant partners on a small budget. Even though migrant partners are not wealthy in the U.S., Canada, and France, they can still afford their trips from these countries to the DR as many airlines offer vacation packages, including cheap flights and accommodations in all-inclusive resorts. These factors made the Dominican Republic a significant in-between destination for Haitian migrants and nonmigrants to meet and sustain their intimate transnational relationships. As such, these factors shape the sociocultural and homosexual meanings that Haitian nonmigrants attributed to the DR while describing their life projects with their migrant partners.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined how homosexuality is a dimension of power that intersects with transnational space and socioeconomic inequality to enable or inhibit the sustainability of intimate cross-border relationships among Haitian gay nonmigrants and migrants over time. In doing so, I discussed how Haitian nonmigrants formed life projects with their migrant partners and how these

projects shaped their lives and socio-spatial perceptions of migration and mobility in the socioeconomic and political context of Northern Haiti during my fieldwork in 2020-2021. As discussed above, I found that nonmigrants' life projects depended on the types, intensity, and longevity of their same-sex intimate cross-border relationships with their migrant partners. When nonmigrants perceived their same-sex intimate relationships with migrants as committed, serious, and long-termly, their life projects included moving in together if their migrant partners planned to return to Northern Haiti to form a family and build economic activity in Northern Haiti or move to the Haitian diaspora to join their partners in the United States, Canada, France, Brazil, Chile, and the Dominican Republic.

When nonmigrants perceived their intimate cross-border relationships with Haitian migrants as temporary but could lead to long-term relationships, they approached their life projects as 'dreams' or goals their migrant partners could eventually help them achieve in Northern Haiti or the Haitian diaspora. This transitionary state of their relationships also shaped how they engaged in intimate sexual acts with their migrant partners residing across the Haitian diaspora. When gay nonmigrants perceived their intimate transnational relationships as non-serious, sex-oriented, and short-term, their life projects consisted of enjoying these relationships while they lasted and receiving some form of remittance from Haitian migrants. Then, their goal was to improve whatever aspect of their daily lives in Northern Haiti with the remittances they received from their migrant partners residing across the Haitian diaspora. As discussed in chapter five, these remittances can be economic, social, and political.

These intimate transnational relationships – whether long-term or short-term – shaped nonmigrants' socio-spatial perceptions of migration and mobility across the Haitian diaspora. In this sense, nonmigrants who were involved in same-sex intimate cross-border relationships with migrant partners residing in the U.S., Canada, and France perceived these three countries as desirable migration destinations because of their strong economies and legal protection of homosexuality. Whereas those

who were in same-sex intimate transnational relationships with migrant partners residing Brazil and Chile perceived these countries as countries where Haitian migrants struggled. Finally, most nonmigrants perceive the Dominican Republic as a country where they could enjoy some vacation time with their partners, visiting mainly from the United States, Canada, and France.

These findings are significant because they show how migrants and nonmigrants form life projects as they navigate same-sex intimate relationships that span national borders. Theoretically, this thesis brings a sociocultural-geographic analysis of homeland-diaspora relations (Ma Mung 1994; Di Meo 2008; Claval 2012) to the transnationalism literature (Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Portes et al. 1999; Faist 2000; Satzewich and Wong 2006; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Audebert 2022) by theorizing the transnational social space as a homosexual transnational space imbued with sociocultural and homosexual meanings that shapes nonmigrants' life projects and socio-spatial perception of migration and mobility.

Combining this geographic analysis of space with the sociology of sexual migration (Luibhéid 2004; Manalansan 2006; Cantú 2009; Carrillo 2017), I demonstrated how Haitian migrants and nonmigrants' life projects are embedded in a homosexual transnational space, which shapes nonmigrants' perceptions of the Haitian diaspora, the development of transnational connections, and the maintenance of same-sex cross-border relationships among men. As such, I showed that homosexuality is a dimension of power that enables the transnational mobility of migrants and nonmigrants in the homeland and across the Haitian diaspora. On the one hand, migrants from the Haitian diaspora, such as Josué's boyfriend, travel from their host societies to the Dominican Republic and the homeland to visit their partners. On the other hand, migrants in Northern Haiti travel from there to join their partners in poles of the Haitian diaspora, such as the Dominican Republic and Montreal.

By focusing on transnational mobility, a sociocultural-geographic analysis of these same-sex intimate transnational relationships decenters the vision of the Global North as the rescuer of the Global South's LGBTQ+ people. Instead, it redirects our attention to how nonmigrants in Haiti embody the romantic motivation and homosexual desire that underlie the transnational mobility of Haitian migrants from the United States, Canada, and France, for instance, to seek refuge, sexual liberation and/or romance in Haiti.

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© Copyright Carlo Handy Charles: Photo taken in Fort Liberté during my one of my last days of fieldwork in Northern Haiti in 2021.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I embarked on an intellectual journey to answer the following research question: what does transnationalism mean to nonmigrant men in Northern Haiti who are involved in same-sex intimate cross-border relationships with migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora in the United States, Canada, France, Brazil, Chile, and the Dominican Republic? This question was grounded in my empirical observations in Northern Haiti and the lack of scholarly research on the transnational connections, ties, and relationships that LGBTQ+ migrants and nonmigrants develop and maintain across national borders.

While men in Northern Haiti talked to me concretely and factually about their experiences navigating same-sex intimate transnational relationships with their migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora, I found that their experiences and perspectives were rarely addressed in the fields of transnational migration and diaspora, as well as the sociology of sexualities. During the three years that I worked on this thesis, I have dedicated my graduate student time to see how I could fill the gaps I have found in the literature in a way that remains true to the experiences and perspectives of men who have sex with men in Northern Haiti while contributing to the fields of transnational migration and diaspora and the sociology of sexualities. At the end of my dissertation journey, I found three main contributions through which my research fills the gaps I have identified in the literature.

Research Contributions

First, I found that homosexuality is a dimension of power that organizes and shapes cross-border connections and same-sex intimate transnational relationships among Haitian migrants and nonmigrants through the Haitian homosexual transnational space. By dimension of power, I argued that homosexual identity and practices intersect with transnational space and socioeconomic inequality to shape how Haitian men in Northern Haiti and the Haitian diaspora connect and develop cross-

border relationships. Second, I found that homosexuality is a dimension of power that shapes the meanings of same-sex intimate transnational relationships and organizes the circulation of people, money, socio-cultural norms, and political ideas among migrants and nonmigrants across the Haitian transnational social space. Finally, I found that homosexual identity and practices are a dimension of power that intersects with transnational space and socioeconomic inequality to shape nonmigrants' life projects with their migrant partners in Northern Haiti and the Haitian diaspora.

By dimension of power, I mean that homosexual identity and practices are a structure that drives nonmigrants and migrants to connect and develop same-sex intimate relationships that span national borders. Arguing so means that homosexual identity and practices are central to the transnational ties, connections, and relationships that migrants and nonmigrants develop and maintain. However, while homosexual identity and practices are central to these cross-border relationships, I contend that they intersect with nonmigrants' understanding of Haiti as a transnational social space structured by socioeconomic inequality to shape how nonmigrants navigate these same-sex intimate cross-border relationships in the context of their families, kinships, friendships, and the local community in Northern Haiti.

I used these three main findings to introduce the new concept of Homosexual Transnational Space, which I defined as a social space imbued with homosexual meanings that intersect with socioeconomic inequality to shape local perceptions of migrants in their homeland, the development of transnational connections, and the maintenance of same-sex intimate relationships among men across national borders. As I discussed in detail in chapter four, in the case of Haiti, the homosexual meanings that Haitian men attribute to the Haitian transnational social space are shaped by Haitian men's homosexual identity and practices in Haiti's and Haitian diasporic communities' socio-historical, cultural, economic, and political contexts. In other terms, these homosexual meanings are shaped by how Haitian men experience their homosexual identity and practices as stigmatized, marginalized, and

discriminated against across the Haitian transnational space in which their lives are embedded. As I discussed throughout this thesis, the findings that ground the conceptualization of Homosexual Transnational Space have significant implications for the fields of transnational migration and diaspora and the sociology of sexualities.

Research Implications

The first implication of this research is that it decenters the focus of the fields of transnationalism and diaspora from a heteronormative, family-oriented, community-driven, and nationalistic approach to redirect our attention to how homosexual identity and practices shape transnational connections, ties, and relationships among migrants and nonmigrants. In doing so, I demonstrate how the Homosexual Transnational Space – perceived by nonmigrants as a physical distance and socio-cultural proximity – is navigated physically and virtually by Haitian men in Northern Haiti and the Haitian diaspora to connect and develop and sustain same-sex intimate relationships that span the borders of their homeland and migrants' host countries. This contributes to the fields of transnationalism by showing how the homosexual identity and practices are a structure that shapes how migrants and nonmigrants develop and sustain transnational connections, ties, and relationships.

The second implication of this research is that it shows how homosexual identity and practices intersect with transnational space and socioeconomic inequality to shape the meanings of same-sex intimate cross-border relationships among migrants and nonmigrants, as well as the economic, social, and political remittances they share across national borders. In doing so, I show how nonmigrants navigate the Homosexual Transnational Space to negotiate money transfers, sociocultural norms, and political ideas, which they use in their daily lives in the context of their families, kinships, friendship networks, and local communities in Northern Haiti. More importantly, I demonstrate that

nonmigrants use their homosexual identity and practices as stigmatized, excluded, and discriminated against across the Haitian transnational social space in conjunction with the notion of Haiti as a transnational state to claim and receive remittances. This finding innovates the fields of transnationalism and diaspora by showing how sexuality, nation-building, and socioeconomic inequality intersect to shape the transnational ties that migrants across diasporic communities develop and maintain with nonmigrants in the homeland and vice-versa.

Finally, the last implication of my research is that it shows how homosexual identity and practices motivate migrants and nonmigrants to move temporarily or permanently across a transnational social space. In doing so, I demonstrate how nonmigrants in Northern Haiti embody a sexual and romantic desire that pushed Haitian migrants from Global North Metropolises, such as Miami, New York, California, Montreal, and Paris, to Northern Haiti to develop and sustain same-sex intimate transnational relationships with migrant partners in the context of socioeconomic precarity and homophobia that shapes their lives in Northern Haiti. This finding is significant to the fields of transnationalism and the sociology of sexualities as it nuances scholarly and discursive understanding of the Global South as a region where migrants seek to escape for better homosexual lives and socioeconomic opportunities in the Global North.

Through nonmigrants' perspectives, I show how migrants from the Global North are the ones who leave these lands of 'opportunities' in the Global North to look for and find 'better' sexual and romantic 'opportunities' in the Global South. While never losing sight of how transnational space and socioeconomic inequality between migrants and nonmigrants shape migrants' mobility projects, this finding forces us to nuance our understanding of South-North migration and mobility and how homophobia drives migration to the Global North and shapes LGBTQ+ migrant integration processes in seemingly socially liberal host countries. In other words, this finding invites reflection

and empirical research on what really happens after LGBTQ+-identified people move from homophobic countries in the Global South to find sexual liberation in the Global North.

This last finding also forces us to investigate how LGBTQ+ migrants integrate into their host societies' contexts. How do they experience their new LGBTQ+ lives in their host societies? How do they navigate LGBTQ+ communities that are sometimes shaped by racism, classism, ageism, ableism, and nationalism (Icard 1986; Green 2007; Carrillo 2017)? For Black gay migrants especially, how do they experience and negotiate their sexual and romantic lives in these host societies?

Sociopolitical Implications

As discussed in chapter six, my analysis of the long-term same-sex intimate transnational relationships shows that in addition to homophobia, gay men's desire to move in with their migrant partners shapes their emigration projects from their homeland to their partners' host countries. In addition to socioeconomic inequality, geopolitics and global migration regulations and governance can shape which gay men get granted a visa to visit their partners overseas. This ultimately affects nonmigrants' mobility or migration projects. As such, despite the remittances that some nonmigrants may enjoy in their long-term same-sex intimate transnational relationships with migrant partners, long-distance is a solid reason for considering ending such relationships. In the Haitian case study, this finding is significant not only from a scholarly perspective but also from a sociocultural and political standpoint.

As mentioned above, many religious and political leaders have weaponized socioeconomic inequality between migrants and nonmigrants as to why some men in Northern Haiti develop and sustain same-sex intimate cross-border relationships with migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora. As such, they claim that some men in Haiti are involved in intimate relationships with migrant partners because of Haitian migrants' money. However, the fact that long-distance and inaccessible visas push

some nonmigrants to end their intimate relationships with migrant partners directly contradicts the idea that economic transactions are the only reason why men, who are perceived as not gay, engage in same-sex intimate relationships with Haitian men from the diaspora. Indeed, if money were the only reason they were engaged in these relationships, they could have chosen the economic remittances they received from Haitian migrants over ending their long-term same-sex intimate cross-border relationships because of long-distance and inaccessible visas for Haitians.

While it is also important not to lose sight of some opportunist Haitian men who may seek intimate relationships with Haitian migrants because of their money, my research findings serve to debunk post-colonial-homophobic discourses, which represent homosexual practices between two Haitian men as being possible only through monetary transactions. A thirty-one-year-old gay research participant illustrates this point with the following: "My boyfriend tells me how talking to me daily gives him a break from his life in New York… He has a very difficult job… he tells me how people mistreat him because he is Black. He never got promoted, while his colleagues got promoted… On top of that, he has never found love there. Sometimes, he tells me he would like to return to live in Haiti with me."

Here, this nonmigrant participant's depiction of his conversations with his migrant partner contradicts the discourse that represents same-sex intimate transnational relationships among men in Haiti and the diaspora as being motivated only by money. In doing so, he shows that Haitian gay men may be engaging in intimate relationships with migrant partners for the mutual comfort they may enjoy in them. Indeed, while the nonmigrant receives economic and social remittances from his migrant partner, the latter may receive other forms of remittances from his nonmigrant partner, such as listening to his problems and comforting him. In this sense, their intimate transnational relationship may become mutually beneficial as the nonmigrant seemingly provides a safe space for the migrant to express the frustration he seemingly encountered in his life in New York.

From this perspective, the same-sex intimate transnational relationship that this Haitian migrant developed with his nonmigrant partner in Northern Haiti may represent a transnational refuge for the Haitian migrant against the hardship he may face in his migrant life in the United States. While the case of a few gay nonmigrants in Northern Haiti cannot be generalized to all Haitian men who have sex with men and are involved in intimate cross-border relationships with migrant partners across the Haitian diaspora, they serve to nuance post-colonial-homophobic discourses about homosexual identity and practices among Haitian migrants and nonmigrants' intimate transnational relationships.

Limitations and Future Directions

There are a few limitations in how I designed and conducted this project. As such, the scholarly community and the public should use these findings carefully if interested in this research. First, my thesis focused primarily on the same-sex intimate transnational relationships that nonmigrants develop and sustain with migrant partners from their homeland. In this sense, it is essential to remember that while I narrated how nonmigrants perceived migrants, I did not examine migrants' experiences of intimate transnational with nonmigrants. This is a critical ontological and epistemological consideration to have while using this research because it focuses solely on the perspectives and experiences of nonmigrants as they navigate relationships with migrants.

This methodological choice forced me as a researcher to study the socioeconomic and political context of the homeland in which these relationships unfold. From this perspective, my findings should be understood as situated in Haiti, not the Haitian diaspora. To truly take migrants' perspectives and experiences into account, I would have needed to conduct ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with migrants in their host countries across the Haitian diaspora in the United States, Canada, France, Brazil, Chile, and the Dominican Republic. This would have allowed me to understand how their lives in the socioeconomic, cultural, and political contexts of these host

countries shape the same-sex intimate transnational relationships that they develop and sustain with nonmigrant partners in Haiti. This is one of the stimulating future directions this research can take. Through a multi-sited ethnography, I can further develop the concept of Homosexual Transnational Space to integrate the experience of Haitian migrants involved in same-sex intimate transnational relationships with nonmigrant partners in Haiti.

Second, this research was limited to the experiences and perspectives of Haitian men who have sex with other men. To further theorize how homosexual identity and practices shape the experiences of LGBTQ+ migrants and nonmigrants who develop and sustain intimate relationships across national borders, I can include the experiences of female migrants and nonmigrants who identify as lesbian, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, and queer. This constitutes another fascinating future direction this research can take. From this perspective, I can study how specific gender identities and sexual orientations shape the transnational experiences and perspectives of LBTQ+ migrants and nonmigrants across a specific transnational space.

A third limitation of this research is that I designed it to focus solely on the case of Northern Haiti. While this allowed me to fill gaps that research on Haitian emigration and homosexuality has left in the literature, my findings from Northern Haiti should be used carefully while addressing the rest of Haiti to avoid overgeneralizations. In other parts of Haiti, socioeconomic, cultural, and political contexts may shape same-sex intimate transnational relationships among Haitian migrants and nonmigrants in different ways. In this sense, I can further develop the concept of Homosexual Transnational Space to comparatively study how LGBTQ+ nonmigrants from different regions of Haiti navigate the Haitian Homosexual Transnational Space physically and virtually to connect with migrants and develop and sustain same-sex intimate cross-border relationships.

Future directions for this research can also include comparative ethnography in the Caribbean to examine how, for instance, Dominican, Jamaican, and Haitian LGBTQ+ migrants and nonmigrants

develop and sustain same-sex intimate transnational relationships. This direction would allow me to study how language and Hispanic, Anglophone, and Francophone cultures shape the same-sex intimate transnational relationships that Caribbean LGBTQ+ migrants and nonmigrants develop and sustain transnationally. Comparative research can also be conducted across Latin America and other regions of the world, where migrants and nonmigrants develop and sustain same-sex intimate cross-border relationships.

These future research directions will keep developing the concept of Homosexual Transnational Space to shed light on the experiences and perspectives of LGBTQ+ migrants and nonmigrants in a global context of reactionary homophobia, leading to increasing stigmatization, discrimination, and exclusion of LGBTQ+ people worldwide. To continue researching and developing the concept of Homosexual Transnational Space is not only a stimulating research pursuit for the future but a political act in the face of prevailing homophobia and transphobia across the globe.

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APPENDIX

Interview Guide

Theme I: Homosexuality

1. How do you define your sexuality?

a) Gay
b) Men who have sex with men
c) Bisexual
d) Straight
e) Other

2. What does your chosen sexuality mean to you?

3. Do people around you know you are _____?

4. How did you get involved in relationships with other men?

Probing questions:

a) How old were you?
b) How did it happen?
c) Were you involved in a romantic relationship with a gay man?
d) How long did the first gay relationship last?

5. How did you experience that first gay relationship?
    a) Did you talk about it with your friends/family?

Theme II: Getting in touch with a migrant/dyaspora:

6. How did you get in touch with your migrant/diasporic partner?
    a) Social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)
    b) Common friends
    c) Other

7. What factors did you consider entering in a romantic/intimate relationship with your diaspora partner?

Probing questions:

a) How did you judge the character of a migrant/dyaspora when considering getting in a relationship with them?
b) How long did it take for you to decide that you wanted to be with a diaspora?

8. What is your current relationship status with your partner?

Probing questions:

a) Were or are you exclusive partners?
b) How long did you stay together?
c) Have you been in relationships with more than one diaspora?

9. Where does your partner reside outside of Haiti?

Theme II: Transnational relationships with diasporas

10. How would you describe your experience dating/being in a relationship with a migrant / dyaspora?

Probing questions:

a) What is the most important thing for you in your relationship with a diaspora?

b) What is the biggest turn-on for you in your relationship with diasporas? What is the biggest turn-off for you in this relationship?

c) How do you compare your relationships with diasporas with that of gay people in Northern Haiti?

d) Do you talk about your diaspora relationship with your friends and family members? If so, how do they respond to this relationship?

11. How do you support each other in your long-distance relationship?

Probing questions:

a) Did /does the migrant/dyaspora ever send you money to support you in Haiti?

b) What did/do you generally use remittances for?

c) How did you use the remittances they sent you? Do you support your family and friends in Haiti?

d) Did/do you also send money to the migrant/dyaspora to support him in his life overseas?

12. What are the positive or negative aspects of dating a migrant/diaspora?

    Probing question:

    a) How has your relationship with your migrant/diaspora partner affected your life in Haiti?

Theme III: Spatial Perceptions/Imagination in Transnational Relationships

13. What is your project for the future of your relationship with the migrant/dyaspora? (If you are not in a relationship with a migrant/dyaspora, would you consider dating other migrants/dyasporas in the future? What was your project with your migrant/dyaspora partner?)

14. Would you consider joining your partner where he lives?

15. What do you know about the country where your partner lives? How do you see/imagine that gay people live in the country where he lives?

16. How do you imagine your future life in your partner's country of residence?

Question to wrap up:

17. Is there anything you would want to add to what we have discussed so far?

Thank you.