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Haitian Votes Matter: Haitian Immigrants in Florida in Local Politics and Government

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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2018

Abstract

The Experiences of Haitian Immigrants in Florida's Local Politics and Government

by

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MA, Webster University, 2010

MA, Webster University, 2008

MA, Webster University, 2004

BS, School of Law of Haiti, 1996

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Haitian immigrants in Florida were not involved in politics and government and therefore lacked any substantive representation. This qualitative study investigated perceived barriers to the incorporation of Haitian immigrants in Florida into local politics and government. The theoretical framework for this study was Marschall and Mikulska's theory of minority political incorporation. The research question addressed the lived experiences and perceptions of Haitian immigrants related to barriers to their political mobilization at district, state, and federal levels. A phenomenological study design was used with open-ended interviews of 10 Haitian Americans who lived in Florida for at least 3 years. Data were analyzed through a 6-phase thematic analysis, were categorized into themes and subthemes, and were later coded to determine which ones best expressed the challenges that Haitian immigrants were facing. Results indicated immigration statuses, language, poor knowledge of U.S. politics, poor leadership, and the absence of a communication platform as factors hindering the incorporation of Haitian immigrants into local politics and governments. Haitian-American leaders could benefit from the results of this study as they may develop a cohesive framework for citizenship drives, voter registration, community outreach, and literacy programs. The positive social change implications from this research include increasing civic and political involvement among Haitian immigrants to change the view that Haitian immigrants are not a burden on the U.S. economy, but a potentially mature and attractive minority group with political value to U.S. lawmakers, district, state and presidential candidates.

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Dedication

To my children Irvika, Seven, Rose V. Kline, and Bobb RJ.

Acknowledgments

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation and thanks to Dr. Christopher Jones, my dissertation chair and content expert. Dr. Jones served as an invaluable mentor through the doctoral process. He not only guided me through the stages of responsible academic research, but also taught me the value and importance of actively contributing to the field of administration and public policy. I would also like to acknowledge the work of Dr. Melanie Smith, who served as my committee methodologist. Dr. Smith shared important insights into research structure, which helped me to complete the dissertation process. Finally, I would like to thank the Haitian-American community who provided me ample information to complete the research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

In addition to having the right to vote, immigrants in the United States also have the right to run for any office except for that of the President (Corrigan, 2014). However, according to Portes and Rumbaut (2014), few immigrants actually run or win elections. Barkan (2013) and de Graauw (2014) stated that having U.S.-elected officials with immigrant backgrounds, at the local or the national echelons, gives the immigrant population some level of representation and a degree of influence in the U.S. political mainstream. The more elected officials representing immigrant groups in government, the more significant their political power in the United States. The more power a group of immigrants has and the more involved a group of immigrants is in their community public life, the more they sway the outcome of presidential elections, especially in battleground states (Hoschschild, Chattopadhyay, Gay, & Jones-Correa, 2013).

Power that derives from political activism and community engagement ensures that immigrant groups are included in and are benefitting from policy changes. According to Bhojwani (2014), political mobilization is a tool that community leaders and immigrant professionals utilize to communicate political opportunities available in the communities with their respective immigrant constituents. Political mobilization enables immigrants to incorporate into local politics and government in a meaningful way (Alba & Foner, 2013; de Graauw, 2014). Political mobilization help increase the number of officials elected into office.

Individuals who migrate from Haiti to the United States and individuals born in the United States of at least one Haitian parent comprise one of the many immigrant groups negotiating for power in the United States. More than 1 million Haitian expatriate and Americans of Haitian descent live throughout the United States in major states such as Florida, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Illinois (Lucien, 2015). Haitian Hometown Associations (HHAs) and Haitian-American Professional Associations (HAPAs)—composed of professionals, community organizers, and political activists—are the critical nodes in a network linking Haitian immigrants with policies and U.S.-elected officials.

HTA and HAPA members launch political mobilization strategies to encourage Haitian immigrants to participate in electoral and nonelectoral activities. Pierre (2015) noted that, despite policy implementation by HTA and HAPA members, Haitian immigrants struggled to achieve an adequate representation in the U.S. political mainstream. Adequate immigrant political incorporation would have positioned Haitian immigrants in a situation to enjoy the minimum level of political momentum necessary to influence U.S. legislation (Wiltz, 2015). Their political incorporation would have also given them the means to self-mobilize toward shifting immigration policies to benefit Haitian immigrants, both newcomers and long-term residents.

According to Trey and Spetick (2013), Haitian immigrants' unresponsiveness to political representation has resulted in an ineffective Haitian political force with little to no political value to U.S. lawmakers. Local chapters of the Democratic and Republican parties did not also court Haitian immigrants to participate or to become active players in

local and national elections. Hence, it was important to explore how HTA and HAPA members did or did not mobilize Haitian immigrants to become engaged in community and political activities.

It was also important to explore how the political mobilization of Haitian immigrants affected Haitian immigrants' abilities to achieve political representation in the United States. The implications for positive social change from my research may lead to legislative coalitions through which leaders of the Haitian community can build the influence necessary to lobby for changes in immigration policies and humanitarian aid policies to Haiti. Results of my study may generate the development of sustainable strategies that may foster enduring positive social change by incorporating mobilization and community engagement behaviors to optimize the voice of Haitian immigrants in their communities as well as increase their influence of Haitian immigrants in the U.S. political landscape.

This chapter includes the background on the experiences of Haitian immigrants in the Florida political mainstream. I address minority incorporation theory, developed by Melissa and Anna (2013), to paint a new picture of Haitian immigrants as a minority group struggling to establish a political presence in the broader community and build political weight in U.S. politics. I present the purpose of the study and key terms and definitions to allow readers to understand the context and the setting of the phenomenon. I also introduce the research design, target population, and sampling strategies that I applied to recruit participants.

Background

The study of the political incorporation of the Haitian community gained greater relevance after the earthquake that occurred in Haiti on January 12, 2010. That earthquake killed approximately 300,000 people and internally displaced more than 1.5 million persons (World Bank, 2013; Yates & Paquette, 2014). According to Vigo (2015), since the earthquake, a new breed of leaders emerged in the Haitian-American community who worked to influence U.S. humanitarian aid policies to Haiti, as well as to bring Haitian immigrants together for political empowerment (Pierre-Louis, 2013).

The new generation of leaders formed standalone, community-based advocacy organizations, the HTAs and HAPAs. Scholars including Arnold (2015), Bayor (2011), Lafleur (2015), Lafleur and Martinellio (2013), and Pierre-Louis (2011) indicated that Haitian leaders became more politically engaged in their communities in the early 2010s especially after the earthquake of 12 January 2010 that destroyed thousands of homes and killed thousands of lives. The 2010 earthquake prompted an increase in social activity from Haitian Americans and Haitian immigrants desiring, wishing, and wanting to help their homeland.

However, achieving political goals such as representation and policymaking has proved to be difficult. This difficulty appears to be a result of a lack of commitment to implement civic engagement and political activism to mobilize the entire Haitian-American community to achieve civic literacy (Alba & Foner, 2014). I focused on the perceived barriers to participation or factors that seemed to prevent Haitian immigrants from actively participating in the political aspects of their communities, states, and

federal government. My research also adds to the current knowledge of the plight of Haitian immigrants in the US by providing a new and nuanced portrait of lived experience of Haitian immigrants in seeking to achieve political incorporation of their communities.

Problem Statement

Haitian immigrants in the United States made achieving their basic needs a priority over becoming politically engaged in their communities (Wah, 2013). Haitian immigrants did not become U.S. citizens for political reasons, but for the immigration entitlements that a citizenship provides (Lucien, 2015). Therefore, the Haitian population was growing disproportionately to other immigrant groups that were actually voting or running for office. As a result, the political presence and the political weight of the Haitian-American community was unnoticeable by presidential candidates as well as U.S. lawmakers who, due to an ineffective representation and a low candidate emergence, found no compelling interests in enacting and defending the Haitian cause (Lafleur, 2013).

The rationale for my research was to understand the barriers that seemed to prevent Haitian immigrants from actively participating in the political aspects of their communities, states, and federal government to vote and elect officials with Haitian backgrounds to public office in their communities. Therefore, the central phenomenon of my research was the incorporation of Haitian immigrants living in Florida communities to build and maintain a political presence in their communities and to achieve a policy responsiveness representation in local politics and government.

Recent studies explored the incorporation experienced by Africans, South Asians, and Cubans in U.S. politics (Bedolla, 2015; Bhojwani, 2014; Waweru, 2014). Nevertheless, there is a dearth of studies exploring the process Haitian immigrants become involved in their community political life. My study has bridged such a gap by documenting the activities implemented by HTAs and HAPAs to help Haitian immigrants establish a sustainable presence in the U.S. system of government; to gain policy representation through the election of representatives of Haitian descent; and to advocate for the political involvement of Haitian immigrants in their neighborhoods, churches, clubs, and other political or civic associations.

Purpose of the Study

It is important to study the reasons that hinder Haitian migrants from self-mobilizing politically to garner a political representation on both local and national stages. This is because of the influence that community engagement and political activism efforts may have on establishing a political presence and a political weight in the U.S. political mainstream (Alba & Forner, 2014; Hoschschild et al., 2013). It is also important to understand the factors that prevented Haitian migrants from self-organizing politically to attract U.S. lawmakers, presidential candidates, and officials of the county and state political parties.

Therefore, in this qualitative phenomenological study, I explored the perceived factors that appeared to hinder the Haitian expatriate community from mobilizing effectively politically at local, state, and federal levels. Specifically, I explored how HTAs and HAPA in Florida help to mobilize Haitian immigrants in Florida communities

to incorporate into local politics and government. I also explored how U.S. elected officials of Haitian descent influenced U.S. legislation and acted to shift immigration policy to benefit Haitian migrants in the US at the local, state, and federal levels.

The research was based on the Ramakrishnan (2013) and Browning, Marshall, and Tabb's (2003) models of immigrant political incorporation. Ramakrishnan (2013) stated that political incorporation is measured by a minority's political presence and political weight in local politics and government, whereas Browning et al. suggested that *mobilization*, *representation*, and *policy responsiveness* as the main phases of political incorporation. The Ramakrishnan and Browning et al.'s models of immigrant political incorporation enabled me to better understand the phenomenon of the lack of political mobilization of Haitian immigrants in their communities.

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Research Questions

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Central Research Question: What were the factors perceived by the members of the Haitian-American community that appear to hinder Haitian immigrants from incorporating effectively into politics at local, state, and federal levels?

Subquestion 1**:** What were the lived experiences and perceptions of expatriate Haitian political leaders related to the barriers and impediments to political mobilization at local, state, and federal levels?

Subquestion 2: What were the lived experiences and perceptions of expatriate Haitian business and community leaders related to the barriers and impediments to political mobilization at local, state, and federal levels?

Subquestion 3**:** What were the lived experiences of perceptions

of expatriate Haitian community members who are recent citizens related to the barriers

and impediments to political mobilization at local, state, and federal levels?

Subquestion 4: What were the perceptions of the Haitian-American community in

Florida regarding how U.S. elected officials of Haitian descent influence changes in

immigration and U.S. humanitarian aid to Haiti policies?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for my research was the process of minority political

incorporation theory that was developed by Marschall and Mikulska (2013). Marschall

and Mikulska) developed this theory to explain how African Americans were mobilized

to incorporate into Louisiana's political mainstream. In their study, the scholars focused

on the substantive representation of Black Americans to explore areas where Black

Americans were better represented and areas where Black Americans were the least

represented. Marschall and Mikulska developed the process of minority political

incorporation theory to propose specific features and strategies for Black Americans to

win elections in Louisiana.

Marschall and Mikulska (2013) identified four stages of the process of political

incorporation. These four stages included candidate emergence, electoral success,

progressive political ambition, and substantive representation. This theory allowed me to

explain the lived experiences of members of the Haitian immigrant community to

present, after a thorough data analysis, their opinions on the phenomenon of political

incorporation in Florida. It also allowed me to understand how Haitian immigrants were

engaged in electoral and nonelectoral activities to promote candidate emergence, and to achieve electoral political goals such as political representation and influences that affected policymaking.

I applied Marschall and Mikulska's (2013) process of minority political incorporation as the logical guide of my study to understand better the strategies (if any) implemented by HTAs and HAPAs to encourage Haitian immigrants to become involved in their community political life to establish a political presence and build weight in the Florida political fabric. Considering few U.S.-elected officials with the Haitian background hold public office in Florida, particularly in Miami, the Marschall and Mikulska process of minority political incorporation theory allowed me to understand the processes by which Haitian immigrants were or were not mobilized to incorporate into Florida's political mainstream.

Nature of the Study

I applied the Van Manen (2014) phenomenology method to explore the reasons behind the unsuccessful political incorporation of Haitian immigrants into local politics. The phenomenology approach allowed me to explore the phenomenon through the lenses of Haitian Americans with direct knowledge and experience of the phenomenon. The rationale for the selection of the phenomenological method over a case study approach was based on the fact that with the phenomenological method, I was able to collect the experiences and understandings of Haitian immigrants of the phenomenon of interest.

A case study differs from a phenomenology study for the former would have allowed me to investigate the development of the political incorporation of Haitian

immigrants in Florida within a specific period without capturing their experiences, perceptions, or their understanding of the phenomenon. A case study focuses separately on the event the experiences while a phenomenology design focuses on the participants and their experiences together (Flyvbjerg, 2013; Sauro, 2015). My goal was to capture the lived experiences of Haitian immigrants regarding political incorporation; therefore, a phenomenology design was more suitable to help me gain such understandings. In addition, I chose a phenomenology approach over an ethnography approach because the aims of the study did not involve understanding a particular phenomenon, but barriers to community engagement and to civic engagement. Likewise, I did not select a grounded theory approach because I did not intend to develop a new theory.

I collected data from 10 members of HHAs, Haitian-American professionals, and other politically active community members in the Haitian-American community in Florida, particularly in Miami. I administered an in-depth interview with open-ended questions to the participants. Due to limited financial resources and geographical restrictions, I delivered the in-depth interview through a web-based platform called Zoom Video Communications. I used Dedoose, a computer data analysis software package, to analyze the data and to help identify emergent themes that was generated from the in-depth interviews (Silver, 2012; Stone, 2013).

Definitions

Haitian immigrant community: According to Lucien (2015), Lafleur (2015), Trey and Spetick (2013), and Pierre (2015), the term *Haitian immigrant community* refers to Haitian immigrants living abroad, and in the case of my study, those living in the United

States, particularly in Florida. This term is also extended to Americans with the Haitian

background or Americans with at least one Haitian parent (Burga, 2012).

Hometown associations: Bayor (2011) defined *hometown associations* as the link

connecting the Haitian immigrant community to Haiti through the practice of sending

remittances, which are monies sent to struggling family members still residing in Haiti.

Since after the earthquake of January 12, 2010, many HTAs in Miami launched social

programs and political activities to encourage Haitian immigrants to be involved in their

community political life (Trey & Spetick, 2013).

Policy responsiveness representation: According to Dovi (2014) and Alba and

Foner (2014), *policy responsiveness representation* refers to the relationship between the

constituency and their elected officials. In the view of Reingold and Harrell (2010),

political representation is how elected officials defend constituents' needs.

Political incorporation: Hoschschild et al. (2013) defined immigrant *political*

incorporation as the process through which immigrants or groups of immigrants become

involved in their community political life.

Political mobilization: According to Beyer (2014) and Shertzer (2013), political

mobilization is the process by which a group or groups of individuals combine their

resources toward accomplishing specific goals.

Assumptions

I assumed that the Haitian community in Florida was representative of the larger

Haitian community in the United States. I selected Florida for my study because 65% of

U.S. Haitian immigrants and Haitian-Americans live in Florida (Lucien, 2015). I also

assumed that findings from my study may be transferrable to other Haitian immigrants across the United States because individuals in the Haitian community in other states may experience the same challenges. I also assumed that Haitian immigrants lacked the political enthusiasm necessary to be involved in their community political life.

Hence, a cohesive mobilization that would promote community engagement and political activism may capitalize on the political possibilities offered by Florida as a battleground state. I also selected Florida for my study because I assumed that the Haitian vote could sway presidential elections in Florida where a mere 500-vote difference can have significant influence on which candidate wins the elections (Gordian, 2012; Menchaca, 2010). I also assumed that the Haitian community in Florida had more potential to be mobilized politically due to its growing size. As such, if mobilized to promote candidate emergence and policy changes, the Haitian community in Florida could become the model for other Haitian enclaves across the country to emulate.

Scope and Delimitations

I selected the state of Florida for my study because, according to Romero (2018), as off 2017, in south Florida alone, there were 333,000 documented Haitian immigrants, of whom 244.000 were U.S.-born or naturalized. Romero further stated that with an approximation of 75,000 Haitian immigrants, North Miami is the largest voting bloc of the state of Florida. Moreover, Lucien (2015) advanced that, of the 1 million Haitian immigrants living in the United States, 650,000 live in Florida. Thus, Florida provided a solid ground for the mobilization of Haitian immigrants at the local and state levels of Florida politics.

The state of Florida was also appropriate for my study because it offers many political opportunities for Haitian immigrants (Bostrom, Brown, & Cechvala, 2016). As a swing state, should the Haitian vote become attractive, Haitian immigrants could be in a unique position to affect the next and future presidential elections.

The population of interest for my study included individuals of Haitian descent in Florida who were political activists, community organizers, spiritual leaders, professionals, or those in a leadership position in the Haitian-American community. I selected participants who met the eligibility criteria regardless of their gender, economic status, or political orientation and were at least 18 years of age.

Although the target population of the study was the Haitian immigrant community in the United States, other Haitian-American communities in other U.S. locations were excluded. However, considering that the Haitian communities in other states are also underrepresented in local politics and government, findings from my study were generalized, replicated, or transferred to them as well.

I did not cover the historical, cultural, and anthropological aspect of Haitian immigration to the United States. Rather, I covered the Haitian immigrant community as a potential political force that could affect the outcomes of presidential elections in Florida. I did not focus on areas where the Haitian immigrant community were more represented or least represented nor did it focus the number of candidates or elected officials representing the Haitian community. Rather, I focused on the Haitian immigrant community as a whole to determine the reasons behind their underrepresentation and their weak influence to shift appropriate policies to benefit Haitian immigrants and Haiti.

Limitations

The study was limited to describing the process, not the results of the Haitian community's political mobilization, because it was already clear that the Haitian immigrant community has not achieved incorporation into their community political life. Given that many immigrant groups were attempting to have a more significant presence and weight at local and national levels (Bedolla, 2015), I did not focus on the political competition and the power imbalances among groups of immigrants. Although scholars have indicated that immigration policies played a vital role in immigrant political incorporation, the majority of Haitians were aware of the process and the various immigration forms and fees required to become legal or to file for residency for their loved ones back home (Lucien, 2015). As such, I did not specifically address immigration policies.

The first limitation of my study was participant access. There was no official database of HTAs and HAPAs operating in the United States. Moreover, no official databases of U.S.-elected officials of Haitian descent were found after many Internet searches and phone calls to city halls, Florida, New York, and Massachusetts Black Caucus local elected officials. These organizations claimed that such data could not be collected because of discrimination laws in place preventing data collection by country of origin. Few city halls were willing to provide such information. To mitigate that situation, I ended up relying on social networks to look for HTAs and Haitian-American professionals as prospective participants for my study.

I identified one location where HTAs and HAPAs met to disseminate, communicate, and exchange ideas and information among themselves. According to Wesolowski (2014) and Borgatti and Everett (2013), the rapid rise of social networks provides an attractive tool for identifying and recruiting prospective participants. I used the 11th Department online platform, where Haitian immigrants form online communities to share ideas, as my recruiting tool. The 11th Department is a social professional network for Haitian professionals who are seeking to reach out to Haitians living in Haiti and Haitians immigrants across the world, particularly in the United States. Haitian professionals use the network as a marketing tool to advertise their services to the community (Devara, 2010). Haitian professionals, political activists, and community organizers used the 11th Department website as a connection tool to connect with other Haitian professionals and to show the international community the works of a mobilized Haitian-American community in the United States. To date, the 11th Department network lists 221 organizations and more than 300 members. It also publishes a monthly newsletter that reaches more than 14,000 Haitian immigrants around the world (Devara, 2010).

Members of the 11th Department website post content (e.g., news articles, photos, and videos), create groups and blog pages, buy and sell Haitian products, post resumes, and job listings. HTAs and HAPAs use this platform as a recruiting and advertising tool to build relationships with friends, members, and followers (11th Department, 2016). I used the 11th Department network because of geographical and monetary resource restrictions.

The second limitation dealt with sample size and sample representation. Kukull and Ganguli (2012) stated that selecting the right sample size increases the generalizability and the dependability of research results. Considering that approximately 330,000 documented Haitians live in south Florida and North Miami, it was critical to select a sample that represents the generalized population. Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013) posited that developing comprehensive criteria was a step necessary to ensure samples are representative of the general population. I reached data saturation when I obtained the same information or when there was no room for more information to emerge about the phenomenon. According to Fusch and Ness (2015), researchers reach data saturation when there is no emergence of in depth information about a phenomenon.

The third limitation dealt with personal biases. According to Creswell (2013), personal biases may originate from a researcher's prior knowledge of the phenomenon under study and a researcher's prior relationship with the participants. Because of my background as a Haitian immigrant who is now a Haitian-American, it was likely that I held in abeyance my preconceived beliefs of the phenomenon.

My goal was to approach the research with new perspectives and ensure I did not incorporate into the data analysis my own interpretations of the problem. Consequently, I did not have prior relationships with the prospective participants. I recruited members of HTAs and HAPAs through a purposeful sampling strategy. Moreover, I developed predefined questions and I had respondents review their responses and my interpretations of their responses as ways to address potential personal biases.

Significance

The current picture of the Haitian community was incomplete. Previous studies presented the Haitian people in the United States as hard workers who remain emotionally and culturally connected with their homeland and who generally do not contribute to U.S. politics (Telus, 2011; Titus, 2012; Zacair, 2010). I aimed to advance the current body of knowledge by presenting a new portrait of the political perceptions of the Haitian-American individuals who, as a group, had the potential to sway election outcomes in the United States, especially in battleground states such as Florida.

Other studies indicated that the Haitian immigrant community was unorganized and thus the reason that its legislative efforts failed to gain traction or catch the attention of U.S. lawmakers (Wiltz, 2015). My study's findings empowered the Haitian community to frame a cohesive strategy to appeal to all Haitian immigrants across the United States. My study's findings can also advance changes in the way organizational leaders and professionals in the Haitian-American community communicate the political mobilization message as well as how they socialize community and political events to the rest of the broader Haitian community.

In terms of implications for positive social change, the Haitian immigrant community may begin to become more active in their community to support candidates and policies and thus establishing a political presence. Haitian Americans may also begin to assume bigger roles in the political arena by running and being elected into offices and thus building a political weight to enjoy a policy responsiveness representation. With a political presence in their communities and political weight in local politics and

government, presidential candidates, and the local chapters of the Democratic and the

Republican parties will begin to court the Haitian vote.

Summary

In this chapter, I introduced the research by providing a thorough background of

the activities of the Haitian immigrant community in the United States to incorporate into

Florida's politics and local government. I presented the social change such a research

may have on the existing literature of immigrant political incorporation in the United

States. I described the rationale and the significance of the study while giving an

overview on the sample and sample size I selected as participants. I also provided an

overview of the sampling strategies, the theoretical framework, the interview strategies,

and the site I selected to recruit 10 individuals with lived experiences and had deep

knowledge of the phenomenon.

In Chapter 2, I present the literature review for my study with a strong emphasis

on the process of minority political incorporation theory developed by Marschall and

Mikulska (2013). In this chapter, I provide an exhaustive review of the literature through

which I explain key themes like political incorporation, political presence, political

weight, and representation, among others.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Approximately 2 million individuals of Haitian descent are living legally in the United States, many of whom are not registered to vote or are not interested in U.S. politics (Lucien, 2015; Wah, 2013; Wiltz, 2015). The few who are registered are not actively engaged in their community public life either as voters or as candidates. Due to their inert position, Haitian immigrants have a low level of representation in local politics and government (Wiltz, 2015). No comprehensive strategy exists to motivate, inform, educate, and substantially increase the political value of the Haitian constituency in Haitian-American communities (Pierre-Louis, 2011). Due to poor community engagement and political activism, there appears to be no direct legislative advocacy to influence American legislation on immigration and humanitarian aid to Haiti (Rigueur, 2011).

Therefore, the Haitian community in the United States, particularly in Florida, was not incorporated into local politics and government. Despite multiple efforts by HTA and HAPA, the Haitian community's political mobilization strategy failed to gain traction to bring their civic engagement and political activism to fruition. Haitian immigrants did not have a strong political presence in their community, were underrepresented in local politics and government, and lacked a cohesive mobilization movement to grow as an attractive political force in the United States (Spetick, Spetick, & Krtesedemas, 2001; Wiltz, 2015).

I explored the political mobilization, or lack thereof, of Haitian immigrants in the United States to examine factors that hinder their ability to achieve a representation in the U.S. political mainstream. I also explored the Haitian community's political alliance with other Haitian associations to determine how they strengthened or weakened the efforts to influence policymaking regarding the Haitian immigrant community.

After the earthquake on January 12, 2010, in Haiti, an estimated 96,000 Haitians immigrated to the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). This immigration was an opportunity to explore the Haitian immigrant community in the United States. Gow (2012) and Lindskoog (2013) primarily studied how U.S. humanitarian aid to Haiti since 2010 affected the country's sustainable economic development. They also studied how, through remittances, the Haitian immigrant community improved the sociopolitical and economic development of Haiti (Rigueur, 2011; Terrazas, 2011; Wah, 2013). According to Joseph (2015), Katz (2014), and Wah (2013), the Haitian community implemented community projects to advocate for a better management of funds allocated to Haitian earthquake recovery. The Haitian advocacy efforts received little attention from U.S. lawmakers or the U.S. media due to a poor outreach to local and national politicians (Lafleur, 2013; Wiltz, 2015). Haitian community-based organizations were mainly composed of wealthy and educated Haitian immigrants who attempted to bring their advocacy agenda to the general population (Katz, 2014). According to Wah, the organizational leaders and professionals in the Haitian-American community failed to strategize to build a political force in their community.

A disorganized Haitian immigrant community had arguably led to an unattractive political force, which in turn has reduced the opportunity of Haitian immigrants to influence U.S. policymaking, especially in the areas of foreign assistance and immigration (Wiltz, 2015). Without an influence in policymaking, the Haitian community did not have a voice for change and assistance on important issues such as healthcare, immigration, and foreign aid funds.

Without an organized and engaged political voice, the needs and demands of the Haitian community remained unanswered. According to Hochschild et al. (2013) and Bhojwani (2014), the degree to which minorities or immigrant groups affect policymaking is related to the extent to which they incorporate their community in local politics and government. De Graauw (2014) stated that political incorporation gives immigrants a political value with opportunities to catch the attention of both the local and federal government. Alba and Foner (2013) and Kurien (2014) posited that political incorporation allows immigrants to have a political presence in their community and a weight in local politics. Preuhs and Hero (2011) conveyed that political presence and political weight are tools that immigrants need to attract the entities that will listen and consider their demands. Through a comprehensive mobilization, the Haitian community could achieve political goals such as a descriptive representation and favorable policymaking. The Haitian immigrant community has been in dire need of organized efforts since the year 2000 (Lafleur, 2015; Rey & Stepick, 2013). With the delay in political incorporation of the Haitian immigrant community, their political goals continue to go unaddressed. Political incorporation is a process that includes political mobilization

through community engagement and political activism. A comprehensive political

mobilization leads to outcomes such as political presence and political weight, or

immigrant influence in local politics through a descriptive representation and policy

responsiveness.

In this chapter, I explore the extent of the political incorporation of the Haitian

immigrant community in the politics and governance of the United States. Specifically, I

describe how the Haitian immigrant community was represented in U.S. politics and

whether their political mobilization was translated into a policy responsiveness

representation in local politics and government. I explain Marschall and Mikulska's

(2013) process of political incorporation theory, which was the theoretical framework on

which my study was based. This chapter, moreover, provided an overview of Hometown

Associations, HAPAs, and U.S.-elected officials with Haitian descent to explore what

was known about mobilization and participation, or the lack thereof, among Haitian

immigrants and their counterparts.

Literature Search Strategy

The adequate and relevant literature of the political incorporation of the Haitian

immigrant community in the United States included appropriate documentation such as

books, policies, publications, and articles from journals including the Academic Search

Complete, Google Scholar, SAGE, the Walden ProQuest, ArticleFirst, the UCLA

Library, and ProQuest Central. Keywords and Boolean phrases included *the Haitian

immigrant community*, *political activism*, *community engagement*, *political activism of

Haitian immigrant community*, *community engagement of Haitian immigrant community*,

cultural assimilation, *political assimilation*, and *Haitian migration to the US*. Other keywords and phrases included *Haiti Hometown Associations (HTAs)*, *Haitian Professional Associations (HPAs)*, *U.S. elected officials of Haitian descent*, *mobilization*, *political mobilization*, *policy responsiveness*, *descriptive representation*, and *political incorporation*.

Background

Recent History

The primary sources of information for the phenomenon of political incorporation are contained in the research of scholars and authors. Pierre-Louis (2013) highlighted that corruption and unending violence coupled with the unwillingness of the successive Haitian governments to maintain relationships with Haitian immigrants played a significant role in the decision of Haitian immigrants to become oriented toward local and national politics. Pierre-Pierre (2016) stated that Haitian-American leaders and Haitian Community-Based organizations have the responsibilities to incorporate themselves into the U.S. political system and thereafter educate, inform, and engage the general population to increase voter and political participation.

After the earthquake of 2010, Haiti's existing financial troubles became much worse. Much of the Haitian immigrant community in the US tried to help their homeland during those difficult times. Rigueur (2011) and Telus (2011) gave a background and understanding of how, through community-based and hometown associations, Haitian immigrants contributed financially to alleviate poverty in their homeland. Rigueur conducted a qualitative study to evaluate, among other things, the migration of Haitians

to the US and the Haitian immigrant community in the US, as well as Haitian political and professional organizations. Rigueur found that the Haitian immigrant community is an important factor in U.S. politics and policymaking regarding Haiti. However, Rigueur also found that the financial help the US and the Haitian immigrant community in the US provided to Haiti has been detrimental to the country because it prohibits political cohesion and self-sufficiency, enabling Haiti to depend on the US rather than solving its own economic troubles. Lindskoog (2013) provided examples of Haitian mobilization to topple the Duvalier regime and support the Aristide government; however, the thesis did not fully state or analyze how the political actions of Haitian immigrants influences their voting behavior in the US.

In contrast to Rigueur's (2011) study, Wah (2013) gave a detailed report of the sociopolitical actions of the Haitian immigrant community and stated that it is necessary for Haiti to rely on support from the Haitian immigrant community in the US. Wah noted the fact that Haitians living in Haiti have significantly less education than the Haitian immigrant community in the US, with 93% of the Haitian immigrant community over age 25 having had schooling compared to only 40% of Haitians in Haiti. Due to this, Wah stated "Haiti has the highest illiteracy rate in the Western Hemisphere" (p. 62). This failing in education is why Wah argued that Haiti has no option but to accept and rely on support from the immigrant community, despite Rigueur's (2011) postulations that such help could hurt the country. Wah's (2013) research also found that the Haitian immigrant community has not yet been able to construct a strategy to work together toward the small goal. Although the homeland government does not invite them to contribute

politically to Haitian development, Haitian immigrants continue to form organizations to raise funds to finance local projects (Lafleur & Martiniello, 2013; Lucien, 2015). Haitian immigrants, mainly the well-educated and the wealthy do incorporate into the U.S. political system, but the general population has yet to build a mature political force. The reason for the lack of voter participation is the absence of a platform to civically educate the Haitian community (Rey & Stepick, 2013). These studies fail to analyze the root cause of the phenomenon for they focus on the problem within only a portion of the plight and actions of Haitian immigrants in Haitian-American communities.

Impact on U.S. Policy

Several studies also addressed the importance of the Haitian immigrant community vote in the State of Florida, which is an important swing state in presidential elections and has a large Haitian population. Wiltz (2015) explained the incorporation of Haitian immigrants in the US, especially in Florida where 65% of Haitian immigrants live. However, Wiltz did not focus on the impact that community and political activism may have on bringing more Haitians to voting polls. East (2012) explained that Haitian-Americans in Florida were energized to vote for Barrack Obama in 2007, but the momentum died down by 2012. Haitian-Americans were reluctant to vote for Obama because of the high skepticism and suspicion that the Obama Administration had trampled upon Haitian laws and institutions to legitimize narcotic trafficking and promote governmental corruption (Ives, 2015). Haitian community-based organizations in the United States accused the Obama Administration of interfering, high jacking, and manipulating the 2010 election results to advance Mr. Michel Martelly over Mr. Jude

Celestin who was officially qualified to face off Professor Mirlande Manigat in the 2010 runoff election (Neinaber, & Beeton, 2014). These organizations also accused the Obama Administration of allowing the Bill and Hillary Clinton Foundation to misuse the money the Clinton Foundation collected for Haiti earthquake recovery.

Moreover, the Obama Administration did not intervene to hold the United Nations accountable for the spread of cholera throughout the country (Sietenfus, 2014). DeWind and Segura (2014) and Seitenfus (2013) stated that the Obama Administration did not answer the requests to repurpose funds the US Congress allocated yearly to the US Aid for International Development (USAID) for Haiti. HAPAs, HHAs, and Haitian-Community Based Associations submitted numerous letters and projects to Congress and State legislatures showing the potential worth of the Haitian immigrant community to the sustainable economic development of Haiti (Wah, 2013). The Haitian-American community has the necessary human and financial capital to be involved in Haiti's socio political and economic infrastructure as well as to contribute, invest, or even assist in how the USAID and its partners commit funds to implement projects for Haiti's recovery.

Through Haiti Special Coordinator, Ambassador Kenneth Merten, the Haitian immigrant community claims that Haitian-Americans can create more jobs in Haiti and in the US than the USAID can; however, the Obama administration did not give their support to the Haitian immigrant community. Although the Obama administration granted temporary protected status (TPS) to undocumented Haitians who were living in the US prior to the earthquake of 2010, more Haitians were deported back to Haiti under Obama than any other previous administrations (Mazzei, 2016; Xenakis, 2016).

Political Incorporation

Several books and other research articles related to the concept of immigrant political incorporation was used in the study. Bhojwani (2014) explained the engagement of South Asians in their community public life. The scholar studied the South Asian immigrant community in New York and their influence on political officials through qualitative interviews with participants and case studies. Bhojwani (2014) conducted 26 participant interviews. Bhojwani stated that involvement in nonprofit organizations could help provide low- and middle-income immigrant community members with increased civic knowledge and skills that in turn increase civic engagement. Bhojwani (2014) found that nonprofit organizations were vital mobilizers for the immigrant community as it helped educate, train, and engage members in civic matters. Dovi (2014) emphasized the different types of political representation, while Ekman and Amna (2012) explained in detail the concepts of minority political participation and civic engagement. Gay (2007) showed that representation in politics and government gave minority the influence to be involved and to influence policymaking for their districts. Gillion's (2014) study focused on U.S. presidents, policy, and their impact on minority communities through an assessment of presidents' speeches, publications, and public opinion from 1990 through 2012. Gillion argued that minority behaviors and public policy are linked, with one influencing the other. Gillion found that minority activism, such as protests, can have a great impact on policymaking. Hochschild et al. (2013) showed that mobilization is the most viable tool that immigrants can use to become embedded social actors into their

community. All of these articles, and more, was synthesized and discussed in this chapter.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework for my research was the process of minority political incorporation that Marschall and Mikulska developed in 2013. In their study, Marschall and Mikulska examined the process through which Black people sought and held political offices in the State of Louisiana. Simply put, the authors studied the representation of Blacks in local government to determine where they made the most progress, where they made the least progress. They studied also areas in which they could improve should they mobilize and educate the Black population to register to vote, participate in town hall meetings, sign and submit petitions, know their representative, and support a specific candidate. With such a knowledge base, the Black community in Louisiana would have had an adequate force to increase their representation in local politics and thereafter pressure their representative to be responsive to the interests of Blacks living in both major and inner cities. Political literacy provides minorities the necessary muscle to push their representative towards influencing policymaking (de Graauw, 2014).

I selected Marschall and Mikulska's (2013) minority political incorporation theory because, despite its emerging political constituency of approximately two million individuals, the Haitian community remains a minority group in the U.S. that has yet not made substantial gains in local politics to influence relevant policies (Baerg, Hotchkiss, & Quispe-Agnoli, 2014). In comparison to other minority groups, especially the Hispanic and Jewish communities, local chapters of political parties and national candidates have

not deployed known strategies to court the votes of the Haitian immigrant community (Bedolla, 2015; Rey & Stepick, 2013). This theory may allow me to understand and then help to offer a fresh and more nuanced portrait of the Haitian immigrant community. Through this portrait, I may be able to highlight the unlimited political potential to sway future presidential elections in the US, especially in battleground states such as Florida. It will also allow me to describe the process of the Haitian immigrant community's political incorporation by analyzing how they are mobilized to establish a policy responsiveness representation in the US.

Shift in the Haitian Immigrant Community Cultural Identity

Younger Haitian immigrants are adopting lifestyles that seem to bridge both U.S. and Haitian cultures. Telus (2011) noted the cultural fluidity of younger Haitian immigrants who willingly espouse the U.S. way of life, while continuing to participate in Haitian cultural events such as Haitian Flag Day and Haitian Independence Day. Galgano, Arndt, and Hyser (2012) affirmed that Haitian migrants developed various formal and informal networks in their communities to promote Haitian pride, assist each other, connect Haitian immigrants with specific policies, and promote a sense of community (Lafleur, 2015; Lucien, 2015; Rey & Stepick, 2013). Mooney (2013) observed that the cultural shift in the Haitian immigrant community has manifested through the establishment of various community organizations. The various Haitian Community-Based Organization include the Haitian American Foundation Inc. (HAFI), the Haitian Women in Miami (FANM), the Florida Department of Children and Family

in North Miami, and Haitian Support Inc. Notably, such agencies affirmed to have an integral role in dealing with the problems that Haitian immigrants face (Wiltz, 2015).

The shift in the cultural identity of the Haitian community has also been evident in the participation of Haitians in local elections. According to Galgano, Arndt, and Hyser (2012), Haitian-Americans become involved in their community public life to eradicate integration challenges faced by the earlier waves of Haitian migrants. They also want to ensure that current and new waves of immigrants are informed of immigration procedures and social and legal services available to facilitate integration into their communities. LeMay (2012) and Gow (2012) contended that Haitians residing in Florida, Massachusetts, and New York are more politically active than Haitians living in Illinois, Georgia, and Pennsylvania.

The number of U.S. elected officials and candidates of Haitian descent and the formation of hometown and professional associations with political undertones prove that the Haitian immigrant community is getting involved in local politics and governments. However, their progression to political incorporation has yet to reach the desired target and to achieve the desired outcomes. The low number of elected officials, the weak participation in community affairs, and the light political weight in the Haitian community may be the result of low voter turnouts in local elections as well as the political mobilization message that has not yet caught up with the larger Haitian population.

A Booming Political Minority

The Haitian immigrant community is an emerging political constituency in the US, but it is still a slow-moving political electorate. Very little attention is drawn to its patterns of involvement in local affairs as well as participation in their community electoral process. Historians, anthropologists, and sociologists who presented the minority as a group not interested in or not understanding of U.S. politics have mainly conducted existing research on the Haitian immigrant community (Katz, 2014). When it comes to studies on immigrant or minority political incorporation, major studies primarily focus their resources on Latinos, Asians, and Africans (Baerg, Hotchkiss, & Quispe-Agnoli, 2014; Bedolla, 2015; Bhojwani, 2014; Keyes, 2014; Waweru, 2014). Recently, a limited number of scholars have studied the Haitian immigrant community's political behavior to assess their contribution to their community political mainstream (Gow, 2012; LeMay, 2012; Rey & Stepick, 2013).

Although few Americans with a Haitian background have won seats at the local level, a lot more needs to be achieved to facilitate the political incorporation of the entire Haitian immigrant community (Wiltz, 2015). Disinterest in politics and lack of civic skills were identified as some of the reasons for the Haitians' lack of participation in local politics and involvement in community activities. Lindskoog (2013) conducted his study on international activism of the Haitian immigrant community in New York City and Miami. He posited that Haitian political activism in the US began in 1957, when a group of Haitian refugees mobilized members of the Haitian immigrant community and made U.S. allies to topple the Duvalier regime. The Haitian immigrant community also builds

professional associations to promote community connectedness and civic participation via active collaboration and effective partnerships with other immigrant groups. Hence, the community and political involvement of the Haitian immigrant community in the US is represented by the hometown and professional associations and elected officials of Haitian descent, which continue to be opportunities for future community engagement.

Haitian Hometown Associations

HHAs are groups of Haitian immigrants who come together in an effort of social responsibility to support and improve the lives of those who still live in Haiti. Previous literature documented HHAs as agents of international development or immigrant community organizations involved in remitting monies and developing projects to alleviate poverty in their homeland, especially in their city of origin (Bosiakoh, 2012). Less attention has been paid to HTA capabilities of bringing people together for political empowerment through civic participation and immigrant mobilization. On various occasions, HTA members acted as political activists and community organizers in attempts to bolster civic participation (Wiltz, 2015). They provide classes on citizenship, residence, and voter registration to sharpen their members' knowledge of U.S. politics (Stepick & Stepick, 2013). Somerville, Durana, and Terrazas (2008) asserted that HTAs were predictors of political participation because of their capabilities to reach a larger number of members. Pierre-Louis (2013) highlighted that HTAs have launched local grassroots movements and advocacy programs to provide a voice to their respective immigrant community.

Ozdemir (2014) defined HTAs as immigrant community and community-based organizations through which groups of immigrants formed social alliances to maintain connections with their homeland. Dowding (2011) stated that the role of HTAs had shifted from transnational politics to ethnic politics by which they became involved in affecting policymaking in their local communities. According to Ramakrishnan and Viramontes (2010) and Mossel, Procaccia, and Rácz (2013), HTAs had potential to assemble immigrants around the same purpose through community and political activities. Very often, HTAs act as the bridge between the immigrant group they represent and candidates and the government. HTAs support specific policies and, at times, play the role of Political Action Committees (PACs) to finance political campaigns.

The 2010 Earthquake and HTAs

After the earthquake of January, 2010, there was an increase in the formation of HHAs in the US, many of which were registered under the charity and non-profit code 501(c)3 of the IRS (Passel et al., 2014). There is no centralized HTA database, but Rigueur (2011) found that as of 2011, there were 346 Haitian HTAs registered in the US as 501(c)3s. They are most prominent on social networks where they share their mission with the public. These organizations utilize social media, primarily Twitter, Facebook, and the 11th Department as avenues to raise awareness and rally more individuals around their cause. Very often, their posts do not generate the necessary energy to capture the audience and carry out or execute their mission.

The Limitations of HTAs

HTAs operate as standalone entities involved at the neighborhood level to influence change in their small communities. They maintain strong relationships with leaders and churches to reach a wider audience. They fill the vacuum left by political parties at local levels to boost immigrant participation in elections and electoral activities (Rey & Stepick, 2013). However, despite their community engagement and political activism, many HTAs have not been strong enough to seek coalitions with other pockets of Haitian leadership or other HTAs operating in other Haitian-American communities (Yu, 2014). They have not been strong enough to either seek or form alliance with other minorities and other ethnic groups including Black people, Hispanics, or Asians (Witz, 2015). Ramikrishnan and Viramontes (2010) asserted that coalitions and alliances among immigrant communities were instrumental in attracting the required channels and facilitating the incorporation of the immigrant community they serve. These conflicting views of the potential strength that HTAs have left a gap in the knowledge for researchers to further explore the potential and possible growing influence of HTAs.

Haitian HTAs are likely to have two missions: a transnational mission to engage and encourage members to influence on homeland politics and an ethnic mission to educate, inform and engage members with the goal of increasing voter and political participation (Bosiakoh, 2012). However, both of their missions involve mobilizing the whole immigrant community to become agents of social change (Gow, 2012). While they work toward influencing political decisions in Haiti, they also develop strategies to articulate U.S. political issues and concerns to Haitian migrants (Rey & Stepick, 2013;

Terrazas, 2011). HTAs, which range from professional, religious, and political organizations, bring the Haitian immigrants together to address the urgent needs of their communities and their homeland. They are formed by Haitian migrants who share a commitment to bringing benefits to Haitians in Haiti and the US in the fields of health, education, environment, and politics. Rey and Stepick (2013) found there was little to no collaboration among HTAs. Although they had common goals, they acted individually, competed for the same members and same financial resources, and very often worked at cross-purposes. The inability of the Haitian immigrant community to collaborate to develop a cohesive political mobilization may be the root cause of being so poorly represented in local politics and not having a strong political presence in their communities.

Haitian HTAs and Politics

Haitian HTAs are composed of organizational leaders in the Haitian-American community who work to connect elected officials and community leadership with their constituency (Lafleur, 2015). They are community organizers, political activists, professionals, spiritual leaders, and radio and television hosts. They have unlimited strengths and incentives to politically mobilize Haitian migrants to vote and support specific policies at the same rate that they promote transnational politics. Due to the local chapters of the Democratic and Republican Parties not having a strong presence in Haitian-American communities, Haitian HTAs may be also involved in launching political campaigns and lobbying for political candidates.

Haitian HTAs encourage the Haitian constituency to participate in non-electoral events including protests, town hall meetings, and demonstrations. Getting immigrants out in the streets is vital to achieve the success of political activities. Active participation in these events generates attention from the public, media, and thereafter that of lawmakers and high profile political candidates (DeGraauw, 2014). Bhojwani (2014) posited that minorities build their political presence and political weight by having a continuous presence in local activities.

HTAs have also implemented non-electoral, culturally-sensitive activities to prepare the larger Haitian constituency to become an electoral base and achieve successful political incorporation. Culturally-sensitive activities include literacy and linguistic skills, citizenship classes for already deeply rooted immigrants, immigration classes for newcomers, healthcare related issues, social service information, voter registration, and Get Out the Vote programs. HTAs are better positioned to lead these movements not because of their education or wealth, but because they have firsthand experience of these issues (Pierre, 2015).

Their connections with the local leadership and their professional interactions with the larger population provide them strong legitimacy to approach the population and mobilize them around issues affecting the Haitian immigrant community. Political mobilization initiatives at the local levels are likely to attract minorities because community organizers and political activists are likely to develop issue-based and issue-oriented political agendas affecting the entire Haitian immigrant community (Beyer, 2014). Implementing these initiatives would be greatly beneficial to the Haitian

immigrant community because increased mobilization would enable them to influence policy-making that directly or indirectly influences them.

Haitian-American Professional Associations

Immigrants in the U.S. are not only job seekers; they are professionals. They are also individuals seeking to improve their education. Immigrants attend college, earn degrees, work in their field of expertise, and very often launch businesses to serve their community. Immigrant professional associations are entities that mobilize and connect immigrant professionals of diverse occupations around providing services to community residents (Dowding, 2011). Immigrant professional associations are vital to facilitate immigrant integration into their community (Ozdemir, 2014). Immigrant professional associations are also involved in political mobilization to impact future policies (Beyer, 2014). However, despite their ability to bring immigrant professionals together, in order to attract and maintain membership, these associations need to be able to offer opportunities that may not be available elsewhere.

Professionals of the Haitian immigrant community organize themselves into professional associations to share their skills and identify gaps in services provided to immigrants in their communities. Specifically, each state in which Haitian migrants settle has a professional association formed by forward-thinking Haitian migrants and Americans of Haitian descent who are committed to working together toward the political and economic empowerment of the Haitian immigrant community in the US.

This difficulty may arise for various reasons. Markova, Ford, Dickson, and Bohn (2013) found that professional associations struggle to keep members because they

cannot deliver tangible benefits. On a broad scale, although Haitian professionals may join professional associations to make a difference in their community, they struggle to expand their membership numbers to a level that is effective nationwide.

Political Representation

Immigrants build their representation traditionally by using politics as a bridge to connect them with local and federal governments. By gaining seats at city halls and statehouses, immigrants ensure they are represented in local politics and government (Bhojwani, 2014). Jiménez (2014) asserted that immigrants used community activities to gain and maintain visibility in their community. Immigrant visibility or representation is synonymous with political weight and political presence (Morales, 2011).

Political representation is descriptive, formalistic, symbolic, and substantive (Bhojwani, 2014). Each of these forms determines the level of presence and weight immigrants have (Disch, 2011). Political presence and political weight give immigrants an active voice regarding issues that negatively affect their communities.

Descriptive Representation

Many researchers offered their definition of descriptive representation. For Dovi (2014), descriptive representation occurs when elected officials bear cultural resemblances to those they represent. It is based on the interests elected officials shared with the constituency and the electorate (Ramakrishnan, 2013). In a descriptive representation, elected officials help build the trust of the people government because officials are representing solutions to overcome sociopolitical problems and remove obstacles to community development. Descriptive representation creates legitimacy and

visibility, and more importantly, compels ethnic elected officials to make alliance with

other minority elected officials to influence and pass legislation that may improve the

socio-economic and political growth of the diverse immigrant population (Swain, 2011).

In the case of the members of the Haitian immigrant community, a descriptive

representation would build the Haitian immigrant community's political presence and add

political currency to the process of political incorporation. Achieving a descriptive

representation, elected officials would better represent and defend their and those of their

country of origin in the U.S. political structure (De Graauw, 2014).

Formalistic Representation

Political representation involves relationships between the people and their

elected officials (Swain, 2011). It promotes formal agreements where the constituency

authorizes its representatives to perform specific duties regarding the constituency's

interests. By this formal agreement, the representatives are held accountable and are

required to provide accounts of their actions and decisions (Garbaye & Mollenkopf,

2012). Bhojwani (2014) contended that formalistic representation is based on pre-

established institutional arrangements. In a much simpler term, elected officials receive

authorization to represent the constituency, and the constituents can punish officials if

they fail to perform based on such pre-established institutional arrangements.

There have not been studies on the Haitian immigrant community's formalistic

representation in the US. The unique case, nonetheless, involved Mayor Lucie Tondreau.

On 16 December 2014, she was sentenced to 65 months in prison for her direct

involvement in a multimillion-dollar mortgage fraud scheme (Munzenreider, 2015).

Although her actions were not related to her duties as a Mayor, the 12-person jury

conveyed that her position as the North Miami mayor placed her in an influential position

to lure "straw buyers" into her eleven-million-dollar scheme. The City of North Miami

punished Trondeau for poor accountability and for failing to be responsive to her

constituency (Dixon, 2015). Weaver and Dixon (2015) highlighted that although another

Haitian-American won the election to replace Trondeau, Haitian immigrants in North

Miami received a bad reputation of untrustworthiness (Wiltz, 2015). The actions of

Trondeau compelled other Haitian-American community and political leaders to tailor

their campaign speeches around mobilizing, restoring trust and confidence, and

convincing the North Miami constituency they would uphold the standards of a better

formalistic representation.

Symbolic Representation

Political representation involves the acts of materializing the physical presence of

a group or groups of immigrants in policy debates (Ramakrishnan, 2013). It is about the

meanings the constituency attributes to its elected officials and vice versa. It is about the

pride associated with the actions of having Haitian-Americans as candidates or elected

officials. Symbolic representation encourages the Haitian immigrant community to push

more Haitian-Americans into office (Wiltz, 2015). Although Wyclef Jean was not a

political figure, when he accepted the Grammy on Black Entertainment Television

(BET), it was a moment of pride to see the Haitian flag flying for the first time on

national television. Before the year 2000, Haitian-Americans were scared, rather

ashamed, to socialize their Haitian background. Once they started winning elections, they

began to publicize their Haitian heritage to attract the Haitian immigrant community vote
(Rey & Stepick, 2013). They move parts of their campaigns on Haitian media and in
Haitian-Creole to reach and captivate a wider audience.

Substantive Representation

Minorities with substantive representation elect officials with the influence to
achieve policy gains for their ethnic communities. This type of representation is assessed
by how representatives intervene to advance policies that serve the constituency's best
interests and champion community needs (Dovi, 2014). Haitian politicians, especially the
Haitian government, with the support of few Haitian activists in the US, pushed Congress
to enact the Haitian Immigration Fairness Act in 1998 to allow Haitian nationals who had
been living in the US to apply for permanent residence (Lindskoog, 2013). In 2010, a
handful of Haitian politicians pushed the Obama Administration to allow Haitians who
have been living in the US without proper authorization to apply for TPS (Katz, 2014). In
2011, Haitian politicians were deeply involved in helping Congress in their selection of
diplomats to initiate more enhanced dialogues between Haiti and the US (Lafleur, 2015).
Thus, the Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement (HOPE) Act of
2006 was amended and extended to appropriate more funds to strengthen Haiti's political
structures and to improve the country's economic development (USAID, 2015). A
substantive representation is needed to have a strong political presence in local politics
and government (Preuhs & Hero, 2011). Without a strong political presence in local
politics and government, the voice and needs of the Haitian community may not achieve
the outcomes of political incorporation.

Political Mobilization

Older studies of immigrant groups reflected that citizenship is needed for immigrants to register to vote, vote, and participate in electoral activities, and in the decision-making of their communities (Gay, 2007; Mansbridge, 2003). Newer research took a different approach and advanced that citizenship or legal status is not required for immigrants to enter the political environment of their communities (Alba & Foner, 2013; Jones-Correa, 2013; Lieberman, 2013). Bedolla (2015) stated that political mobilization applies to all immigrants physically present in the community independently of their immigration status. Although unable to vote, there is no law, policy, or ordinance preventing immigrants to mobilize to build a political presence in their communities. Additionally, Alba and Foner (2013) highlighted that political incorporation is not synonymous with electoral success and policy responsiveness representation, but a factor providing immigrants unlimited opportunities to be engaged in community activities and build coalitions with other groups of immigrants to sway the vote of their citizen counterparts.

On the other hand, Bhojwani (2014) stated that political participation cannot happen in isolation. To be effective, political mobilization requires a strategic plan to educate, inform, and engage individuals with the goals of increasing voter and political participation (Uriel, 2014). The literature on political mobilization suggested that political action and advocacy groups as well as community-based organizations are uniquely positioned to encourage individuals to participate in both electoral and non-electoral activities (Klandermans, 2013). Minorities' affiliations with specific political candidates

motivate organizational leaders and professionals in the Haitian-American community to establish the logic behind mobilizing their respective constituency (Fischer, 2012).

Political Mobilization in Minority Groups

DeGraauw (2014) and Marschall and Mikulska (2013) highlighted that political mobilization transformed inert immigrants into active agents of change with a continuous presence on the political scene. However, other researchers (Bedolla, 2015; Bhojwani, 2014; Però & Solomos, 2013; Rodrigue, 2013) contended that because political mobilization requires that minorities be civically literate to participate in electoral and non-electoral activities; it becomes the responsibility of organizational leaders and professionals in the Haitian-American community to initiate dialogues around issues that hinder the integration of Haitian immigrants into their communities. Doing so may enable the Haitian immigrants to become engaged in their communities and in politics.

Political mobilization is an expedient utilized by immigrant or minority groups in the US to build a presence, weight, and representation in local politics and governments (Alba & Foner, 2013). Mobilization presents opportunities for minorities to influence the existing distribution of powers because it improves the relationship between the people and their representation as well as between the people and community leaders (Barreto, Merolla, & Soto, 2011; Beyer, 2014). The two dimensions of the process of political incorporation are civic engagement and political activism (Morales, 2011). Bhojwani (2014) stated that the political outcome of political mobilization is a policy responsiveness representation. Political mobilization is especially important to the Haitian immigrant community because it is so underrepresented in the US.

The inequality in government representation gives more influence to other immigrant community groups to impact U.S. policymaking. Political underrepresentation strongly influences the decision making of elected officials in the ways they represent their constituents (De Graaw, 2014). For example, an immigrant community group with a strong representation may have laws and policies enacted in their favor. This is present in the current immigration policies that are more welcoming to Cuban immigrants than Haitian immigrants (Bedolla, 2015). As a result, the low percentage of Haitian-Americans in politics affect the descriptive characteristics of the entire Haitian immigrant community in the sense that Congress and state legislatures will continue to write laws and expectations that are not tailored to the needs of the Haitian community (Bhojwani, 2014). Underrepresentation may lead to greater individual, family, and community neglect, with real-world consequences for income potential, health and well-being, and educational opportunities. It may also influence voter behavior and turn out because Haitian Americans do not feel empowered in the political system and that their needs are not fairly represented in the government.

Civic and Community Engagement

To facilitate a more active political voice, Haitian immigrants, regardless of their immigration status, likely need a platform to help motivate them to participate in community and political activities including protests, town hall meetings, volunteering, signing petitions, and other forms of traditional and non-traditional politics. The platform could also energize the Haitian-American electorate to register to vote, vote, and run for office while emphasizing on the impact of the Haitian vote on future legislative and

presidential elections. Read and Overfelt (2014) defined civic engagement as a set of

actions that motivate a particular group of individuals to be involved in their

sociopolitical community. Civic engagement is both political and non-political and leads

to future political endeavors (Morales, 2011). According to Gillion (2014) and Weller

and Nobbs (2010), civic engagement becomes political when it involves the acts of

voting and getting elected. Civic engagement is critical because it does not require

residence, citizenship, or any other legalization (Amna & Eckman, 2012). Consequently,

any Haitian migrant, regardless of immigration status, can choose to be involved in

community political life through community engagement and can do so without having a

green card or a certificate of naturalization. Community engagement, limited to non-

electoral activities is, therefore, an option available to all members of the Haitian

constituency (Titus, 2012). In a simpler term, as it pertains to my study, civic engagement

includes actions implemented or communicated by organizational leaders and

professionals in the Haitian-American community to appeal to the Haitian immigrants'

concerns including immigration, citizenship, and employment.

Community engagement moves across racial lines to enable immigrants to

maintain multiple social networks across ethnic boundaries to strengthen their voice

(Kazemipur, 2012). Through practices of community engagement, immigrants bind in

homogenous areas to collaborate among them and with community leaders (Jimenez,

2011). Immigrants develop citywide civic engagement practices to connect with diverse

groups through a deliberative process and communication (Morales, 2011). With

community involvement, community leaders implement social networking, civic

awareness, and social connectedness activities to enhance communication among participants (Kazemipur, 2012). Civic engagement activities teach the larger Haitian population literacy skills and reinforce and articulate the political mobilization message to the whole Haitian immigrant community (Rey & Stepick, 2013). Civic engagement activities motivate Haitians to become involved in local voluntary organizations as agents of change (Lafleur & Martiniello, 2013).

There is a lack of scholarly research on the kinds of community and civic activities on the Haitian political behavior in the US, especially in Florida. Prominent local newspapers such as the *Miami Herald* and *Orlando Sentinel,* however, publish editorial articles explaining the involvement of Haitian immigrants in politics. Members of the Haitian immigrant community form online groups to encourage Haitians to support or vote for candidates with Haitian background (Wiltz, 2015). Haitian community-based organizations and professionals utilize social networks, radios, and televisions to transmit their messages to Haitian-American communities as well as to connect prospective candidates with the Haitian constituency and electorate (Lucien, 2015).

The Haitian immigrant community began socially integrating into their respective communities at the beginning of the year 2000. The first Haitian task force was the Haitian Association of Elected Officials whose ten elected officials began to initiate civic engagement dialogues with the Haitian community of Miami-Dade County. In 2000, HAFI was launched to work closely with other non-Haitian agencies, the Florida Department of Children and Family in North Miami, and the Florida Department of Health in North Miami to support at-risk girls (Lucien, 2012).

There was an increase in 2000 in the number of Haitians wanting to make their voice heard by government officials (Lafleur & Martiniello, 2013). Haitian community-based organizations utilized carnivals and sporting events and concerts promoting Haitian culture as venues to transmit community engagement and political messages (Lafleur, 2015). According to Wiltz (2015), HTAs and HAFAs are more active in their communities on Haitian Flag Day and Haitian Independence Day, which respectively fall on May 18 and January 1. They are also active on Labor Day in New York where they organize the Haitian carnival in the streets of Flatbush in Brooklyn. On these days, Haitian migrants take the streets in droves wearing T-Shirts with the country's logo and waving the Haitian flag and. Politicians and elected officials their ideas to connect and reconnect with the Haitian immigrant community. These activities would be better for the Haitian immigrant community's political presence if they were sustained throughout the year (Lucien, 2015).

Political Activism

Political activism consists of sets of actions taken by individuals to promote or raise awareness of particular issues. Ciment and Radzilowski (2015), McAdam (2013), and Schacter (2014) posited that immigrants or members of a minority group take political actions to be involved in their community political life. Political presence and political weight are not necessarily about having immigrants elected into offices; they are also about mobilizing immigrant communities around a common purpose through shaping interactions between local and community leaders (Bhojwani, 2014). According to Marschall and Mikulska (2013), political activism is framed around leadership and

political exchange. Bedolla (2015) stated that political actions primarily include the acts of becoming citizens, voting, getting elected, or receiving presidential appointments.

The Haitian immigrant community's political achievements, when studied separately, may show that the Haitian immigrant community has garnered a political representation at the local and national stages. However, considering the Haitian immigrant community is approximately two million individuals, Haitian immigrants are far from achieving political incorporation (Pierre, 2015). A lot needs to be achieved to help the Haitian immigrant community establish presence and build political weight in their communities.

Wiltz (2015) posited that although the first Haitian-American elected to office was in 1993 in El Portal as the Miami-Date councilman and later as a mayor, it was not until 1998 that the Haitian immigrant community "came into their own" politically. In 2000, they elected the first Haitian-American to the Florida Legislature (Lafleur, 2015; Lucien, 2015). From 2000 to 2010, they continued electing Haitian-Americans, but according to Rey and Stepick (2013), the level of civic engagement and political activism was not enough to increase the political momentum required to achieve tangible outcomes.

Wiltz (2015) reported that in an interview, three-time elected Representative Daphne Campbell answered a journalist's question, saying: "If we are voting, why are we still struggling, why can't we do more to impact immigration policies, why am I the only one in the Florida legislature and why are we not providing a voice to the voiceless?" She pressed organizational leaders and professionals in the Haitian-American community to

be engaged and mobilized the rest of the Haitian immigrant community to tackle the issues of literacy and English proficiency that prevent Haitians from engaging in building a mature political base (Wiltz, 2015). In 2012, there was a surge of candidates with Haitian background in Florida's primary election field and members of the Haitian immigrant community were motivated to vote for them. However, although most candidates were running as Democrats, the Haitian political activism suffered a setback when President Obama personally endorsed another Black minority candidate over a Haitian-American, Dr. Rudy Moise (Wiltz, 2015).

Political Presence

Political presence refers to the visibility and legitimacy of a minority group in the community (Preuhs & Hero, 2011). The Haitian immigrant community vote has not been a political object of desire for the past four election cycles and was still not for the 2016 elections (Pierre, 2015). Political parties have not invested much energy in gaining their vote because, in the most non-technical language, national candidates do not know that the Haitian immigrant community exists (Pierre, 2015). Political parties' disinterest in the Haitian vote is due to a lack of continuous and sustainable political mobilization to encourage Haitians to show up at street rallies and town hall meetings, to launch voter registration programs, register to vote, and run for and support effective political campaigns (Keyes, 2014; LeMay, 2012).

Pierre (2015) noted a lack of Haitian political participation in the US, especially in the 2000 presidential election. In fact, East (2012) reported that the most political energy shown by the Haitian immigrant community was in 2008. Such political

enthusiasm was related to the fact that Barack Obama promised immigration changes all across the board. Their political participation in the 2008 election paid off in 2010 when the Obama Administration granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to undocumented Haitians who were living in the United States 1 year before and after the earthquake of January, 2010 (Lucien, 2015). According to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USICIS), TPS for undocumented Haitians has been extended through July, 22 2017 to allow more eligible Haitian immigrants to apply (Lafleur, 2015).

The lack of political participation of the members of Haitians in their immigrant communities is related to the fact that most Haitians are engaged in their homeland's politics while seeking employment and legalization opportunities in their state of residence (Passel et al., 2014). Their ties with Haiti and their quest to become legal residents of the US and to land employment sap their political energy and their inclination toward involvement in ethnic politics.

Ethnic politics allow immigrants to incorporate into their community political mainstream whereas transnational politics allow immigrants to maintain sociopolitical ties with their native country. Lafleur (2015) and Lucien (2015) stated that Haitian community based-organizations and Haitian leaders tailor their activities around mobilizing the members of the Haitian immigrant community to come together to influence their native country's politics. Because of their continuous focus on transnational politics, Haitians discarded ethnic politics and they had a weak political representation in their communities (Passel et al., 2014). According to Salawu and Hassan (2011), ethnic politics is defined as actions implemented by immigrants to be

involved in the politics of their host country. Waweru (2014) posited that, through ethnic politics, immigrants seek political powers to be represented in politics to improve their living conditions in their community. They also do so to build a political power to influence their host country's policies toward improving their homeland.

The lack of efforts by organizational leaders and professionals in the Haitian-American community to mobilize the Haitian community has been very candidate and election specifics in the sense that they are not sustained in periods of non-elections (Pierre, 2015). Candidates for public office, Haitian community-based organizations, political activists, and community organizers interact with each other primarily at cultural events where members of the Haitian immigrant community are likely to attend. According to Pierre (2015), in 2008, Haitian-Americans showed up at the polls to vote for Obama. Pierre highlighted that many Haitians posted selfies with their Certificate of Naturalization on Facebook or in front of the U.S. flag with the caption "My Vote is for Obama. Haitians who were not eligible to vote were seen wearing Obama T-Shirts to encourage Haitian-Americans, Blacks and other immigrant groups to vote for Obama because of his message of hope and change (Lucien, 2015).

After the election of 2008, the Haitian immigrant community did not keep the community engagement, advocacy, outreach, and momentum going to keep their presence visible on the US political scene (East, 2012). The Haitian immigrant community did not display the same political enthusiasm in Obama's 2012 political campaign although the administration ran on the same 2008 message (Wiltz, 2015). Obama did not do much to fix the U.S. immigration problem, where more Haitians have

been deported under the Obama administration than under any other administration

(Xenakis, 2016). In 2016, the Haitian vote was ignored by the Clinton campaign while

the Trump campaign reached out to the Haitian community in Little Haiti.

The scale of outreach efforts such a minority or immigrant group utilizes to keep

its constituents engaged and its electorate energized maintains a political presence of a

minority or an immigrant group in a community. The Haitian immigrant community's

civic and community engagement is achieved through the presence of Haitian

community-based organizations providing civic support and political activity and

educating the larger Haitian population on the political process. Haitian community-

based organizations are nodes between political actors, candidates, and the larger Haitian

population (Rey & Stepick, 2013).

Policy Responsiveness Representation

Political representation, regardless of its dimensions, does not guarantee a policy

responsiveness representation (Bhojwani, 2014). Representation is more about political

presence in the communities than it is about political weight (Dovi, 2014; Preuhs & Hero,

2011). It is not about the number of elected officials that immigrants have in local

politics. It is rather about how these immigrants are represented or how elected officials

work to raise issues, bring awareness to their constituency's plight, and advance policies

that are responsive to the needs of the communities or groups they represent (Marschall

& Mikulska, 2013). Uriel (2014) defined policy responsiveness as a system promoting a

comprehensive relationship between citizens and representatives. Policy responsiveness

involves a two-way communication between a minority group and their representatives

(Pildes, 2014). A policy responsiveness representation is based on the formalistic representation in which two dimensions are authorization and accountability (Dovi, 2014).

In the context of the Haitian immigrant community, political incorporation is defined as the willingness of elected officials of Haitian descent to influence, lobby, and suggest policy change or enact new policies that meet the preferences of the Haitian immigrant community as a whole. In the past five years, Haitian elected officials, with the support of organizational leaders and professionals in the Haitian-American community, encourage Haitian immigrants to support protests organized by the *Black Lives Matter* and *Stop Ethnic Cleansing* movements (Zack, 2015). Representative Campbell also reacted to the killing of Trayvon Martin and requested a repeal of the *Stand Your Ground* law. Haitians are more likely to associate themselves with the Black community than they are with the Hispanic communities (Lafleur, 2015; Lucien, 2015; Pierre, 2015). From 2010 to 2015, the Haitian policy responsiveness representation has been playing a significant role in improving the lives of undocumented Haitians in the US. They pressured the Obama administration not only to grant TPS to undocumented Haitians but to also extend the program until July 2017 to allow eligible Haitians to garner the documents and the fees needed to file the appropriate US Citizenship and Immigration Services forms.

A policy responsiveness representation provides political weight to immigrants. Political weight gives immigrant the power to influence policymaking (Bhojwani, 2014). Through better policy responsiveness representation, the Haitian immigrant community's

concerns and interests could be addressed more effectively and their political presence maintained to become an attractive political force with great value to lawmakers, state and national officials, and presidential candidates.

The question remains whether the political mobilization strategies implemented by organizational leaders and professionals in the Haitian-American community are comprehensive enough to reach the intended target and whether these strategies are sustainable to facilitate the Haitian immigrant community's path to political self-sufficiency. Political self-sufficiency is attained when a group's representation is descriptive enough to represent the interests of its constituency without relying too much on support from the government or other ethnic elected officials (Long, 2013).

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter presented an exhaustive literature of the Haitian immigrant community and their efforts toward political representation in Florida. It introduced the Haitian immigrant community as political minority through a background of how they affected US policy. It also presented the two dimensions of political incorporation, which are political presence and political weight. This chapter gave an overview of HTAs and HAPA; two categories of Haitian Community-Based Organizations that are involved in mobilizing Haitian immigrants around political mobilization. It also expanded on the different categories of political representation and the impact community engagement and political activism may have on the Haitian immigrant community path to residency and citizenship.

The next chapter primarily focused on explaining how data was collected from participants and who was recruited based on their knowledge or interests in the topics of political incorporation and political mobilization. I explained the approach and the sampling methods that I applied to select the participants and administer the instrumentations to them while emphasizing reducing personal biases to increase the credibility of the research.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

In this qualitative phenomenological study, I explored the perceived factors that appear to hinder the Haitian expatriate community from mobilizing effectively politically at local, state, and federal levels. Specifically, I investigated how members of HHAs, Haitian-American professionals, and other politically active Haitian community members in Florida motivated the Florida's Haitian-American immigrant community to participate in electoral and nonelectoral activities.

This chapter includes the research design and the rationale for choosing phenomenology as the research tradition. It also includes criteria for participant selection with a deep emphasis on explaining the procedures for participant recruitment and the logic for instrumentation selection. This chapter also contains a comprehensive plan for data analysis and procedures that I applied to achieve issues of trustworthiness. I also present the ethical procedures I applied to enhance the privacy and the confidentiality of the participants of my study.

Research Design and Rationale

I based my research on the following central research question and subquestions:

Central Research Question: What were the factors perceived by members of the Haitian-American community that appeared to hinder Haitian immigrants from incorporating effectively into politics at local, state, and federal levels?

Subquestion 1**:** What were the lived experiences and perceptions of expatriate Haitian political leaders related to the barriers and impediments to political mobilization at local, state, and federal levels?

Subquestion 2: What were the lived experiences and perceptions of expatriate Haitian business and community leaders related to the barriers and impediments to political mobilization at local, state, and federal levels?

Subquestion 3**:** What were the lived experiences of perceptions of expatriate Haitian community members who are recent citizens related to the barriers and impediments to political mobilization at local, state, and federal levels?

Subquestion 4: What were the perceptions of the Haitian-American community in Florida regarding how U.S. elected officials of Haitian descent influence changes in immigration and U.S. humanitarian aid to Haiti policies?

The central phenomenon of the study was the incorporation of Haitian immigrants living in Florida communities to build and maintain a political presence in their communities and to achieve a policy responsiveness representation in local politics and government. The process of political incorporation revolves around political mobilization, which two primary dimensions are community engagement and political activism (Jiménez, 2011; Morales, 2011).

According to Bhojwani (2014), the outcomes of political incorporation are political presence and political weight, which translates into an attractive political representation in local politics and government. Specifically, therefore, I focused on barriers to participation or factors that seemed to have prevented Haitian immigrants from

actively participating in the political aspects of their communities, states, and federal government. The phenomenological design was the research tradition for my research.

The rationale for choosing a phenomenological design was to, through exploration, gain a deeper understanding of the process of political incorporation that members of HTAs and Haitian-American professionals implement to achieve the outcomes of political incorporation. A phenomenological design allowed participants with direct knowledge of and experience with the phenomenon of interest to provide their perceptions and relate their experiences (Van Manen, 2014). Such a design has been applied in several studies of immigrant incorporation in U.S. academia and cultural and political mainstreams. Ellis (2013) applied the design to describe the perceptions and barriers to Liberian refugee's academic success in the U.S. college classroom. Amor (2015) explored the experiences of Latin American immigrants integrating to the U.S. mainstream culture using the phenomenology design. Spetick et al. (2001) applied the phenomenology design to interview fifteen leaders of the Haitian community in Miami Dade to discover the obstacles to Haitian participation in civic and political arenas.

Spetick et al. (2001) found that the motivation to fulfill basic needs and unwelcomed immigration policies was the main factors Haitians were not actively engagement in their community public life. They found also that the leaders of the Haitian community had not been successfully implemented civic programs to educate Haitians on literacy skills, citizenship, voting, and running for office.

Using the phenomenology design as my research design, Haitian-Americans living in Florida had the opportunities to explicate in their own words what they

themselves perceived as impediments to greater community involvement and active civic participation in their communities. I used the phenomenology design to gain a better understanding of factors that prevented the Haitian-American community in Florida to self-mobilize toward incorporation into local politics and government.

Role of the Researcher

My role in my study was to collect data instead of being naturally and normally part of the social setting. I chose this stance because, although the participants was aware of my Haitian background, I was not a member of the group under study since I did not live and had never lived in Florida. Assuming the role of a neutral interviewer allowed me to remain as culturally neutral as possible. It limited any ethnocentric, political, or cultural bias or alienation I currently had relating to the phenomenon (Olive, 2014).

The neutral interviewer role was more appropriate for the phenomenological approach because it generate data that are more accurate and allows researchers to focus on collecting the data instead of interjecting their opinions throughout the data collection phase (Van Manen, 2014). I did not have any personal or professional relationships with the participants. Hence, I did not recruit my friends and members of my family for the study. Not having prior relationships and not having friends and family members as participants reduce the possibilities for personal biases and power differentials (Creswell, 2013). Using a standard scripted interview questions, I reduced personal biases by reading the survey questions verbatim to each participant. I also had the participants reviewed their answers before I proceeded to the data analysis phase. I also performed

transcript checking through which I sent my interpretations of their answers to the

participants.

Methodology

In this section, I discuss the population, samples, and sampling procedures for the

study. The population consisted of members of the Haitian immigrant community in

Florida, which were Haitian immigrants who was naturalized Americans or who were

born in the United States of at least one parent who was Haitian or who was a Haitian

descent

I recruited individuals of Haitian descent who were political activists, community

organizers, spiritual leaders, professionals in the Haitian-American community in Florida.

The individuals I recruited provided relevant data regarding the Haitian immigrant

community's path to political incorporation in communities in Florida. I recruited the

participants from the 11th Department website using a purposive sampling. The 11th

Department was a great online source to recruit the participants for my study because it

offered a platform to Haitian professionals to connect with local representatives,

congressional representatives, officials of the Haitian government, other Haitian

professionals and members of the international community.

Participation Selection Logic

I recruited participants who resided in the state of Florida, particularly in Miami,

because of the electoral importance that Florida has accrued throughout presidential

election periods. Decades of research referred to Florida as "the road through which

presidential elections go" because of its composition of a politically diverse electorate

shaped by a diverse growing immigrant population (Bedolla, 2015). Florida is necessary

stop for any candidate who is serious about winning the White House. It is also where

immigrant based organizations have been carrying invaluable civic engagement efforts

including civic education and voter mobilization activities to energize immigrants to

understand the importance of their vote.

I also selected Florida because of its growing Haitian-American population

dispersed throughout many major Floridian counties and inner cities. Demographic

increases and geographic concentrations of Haitian immigrants in common areas

including North Miami, West Palm Beach, Fort Myers, Homestead, and Fort Lauderdale

Haitian migration characterized Haitian migration (Lucien, 2015; Spetick, 2013). The

dynamic growth the Haitian immigrant population provides attractive opportunities for

national candidates to court the Haitian vote as they do for the Latino vote (Lafleur, 2013;

Wiltz, 2015). Moreover, such a dynamic growth provides substantive opportunities to

launch a necessary legislative advocacy strategy to address challenges such as domestic

issues such as healthcare, immigration, and civil rights that Haitian migrants face in a

daily basis.

For my study, Haitian immigrants were Haitians who migrated and lived in the

United States irrespective of their immigration statuses. The population that comprised

the Haitian immigrant community in the United State included undocumented, residents,

TPS holders, and naturalized citizens. The term *Haitian immigrant* also applied to

individuals born in the United States of at least one Haitian parent.

For my study, only naturalized citizens and Americans of Haitian descent were considered because they were eligible to vote and to hold public office in the US as well as they account for 6.7% of the voting population in Florida (Wiltz, 2015). I selected individuals in the Haitian immigrant community in Florida because out of the million individuals with Haitian background living in the United States, 654,000 live in Florida, particularly in Miami (Lucien, 2015). Moreover, as a battleground state, the Haitian vote or the Haitian political presence had stronger potential to sway presidential election outcomes in a state whether neither major political party holds or maintains a winning edge.

My study included ten members of Hometown Associations, Haitian-American professionals, and other Haitian-American community members who I recruited from the 11th Department network using the stratification technique. I stratified the population to ensure each segment of the Haitian-American community was accurately represented. The members of the 11th Department are leaders and professionals in the Haitian-American community. They use the network to advertise their services to the community, to seek new opportunities to grow their careers, and to build connections and form coalitions with other Haitian leaders, businesses, and organizations.

I selected the members of Hometown Associations, Haitian-American professionals, and other Haitian community members because they were equipped to drive change in their communities. They had a closed proximity with the general population and organize social, cultural and political events to mobilize Haitian immigrants (Pierre-Louis, 2013). They were uniquely positioned to provide insightful

descriptions of their experiences of political incorporation as well as barriers they

perceived as hindering the path of Haitian immigrants to incorporation into local politics

and governments. Based on Button, Ioannidis, Mokrysz, Nosek, Flint, Robinson, and

Munafò (2013) and Mason (2010), a sample size of ten interviews should produce

sufficient data to achieve saturation.

In keeping with the overall purpose of the study, I applied a purposive sampling

method to recruit the participants on the 11th Department online network. Creswell (2013)

stated that the purposive sampling is used to recruit of participants who have knowledge

or experience the phenomenon of interest. Researchers apply the purposive sampling

when there is a limited number of individuals fit the criteria to serve as primary

participants based on to answer the research questions, the nature of research design and

the aims and objectives of the research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). According

to Dudovskiy (2017) and Black (2010), the purposive sampling method produces rich

descriptions of the phenomenon when it is applied with the phenomenology approach of

inquiry. The purposive sampling method, therefore, allowed me to rely on my own

judgment to select participants who experienced or had breadth of knowledge of the

community engagement and civic participation of Haitian migrants in Florida. Van

Manen (2013) noted that the purposive sampling method is more appropriate when the

researcher's goal is to gain insights of the lived experiences of the participants.

The criteria for eligibility to participate in the study was that all participants were

at least 18 years of age, eligible to vote, and had been living in Florida for at least three

years. I applied a minimum residency of three years as criteria of eligibility because the

longer a participant lived in Florida, the more insightful his or her experience and the more information he or she provided in comparison to an individual who lived in Florida for a year or two. Individuals who used to live in Florida were not be eligible to participate.

To ensure, I recruited from all members of the Haitian-American community, I performed stratification through which all eligible individuals were placed into three groups. Stratification is the process of dividing the population of interest into homogenous subgroups before sampling (Shi, 2015). Stratification allowed me to recruit participants who represented the entire population under study. It also allowed me to reduce selection biases in the sense all the segments of the Haitian-American population was accurately represented. Without stratification, I could have ended up with a segment that was underrepresented or not represented at all. Without stratification, I could have probably ended up with ten organizational leaders or two professionals, eight community leaders and zero community member or vice versa. In such a case, the Haitian-American community in Florida would not have been entirely represented to capture data that are to be replicable, generalized and transferred to any immigrants groups across the state or across the country

I divided my population of interest into three groups, which were organizational leaders, Haitian-American professionals, and community members. Individuals were assigned to one stratum and each stratum experienced the phenomenon differently and were given the opportunities to relate their experiences as they lived it.

The group of organizational leaders was composed of three members who belonged or were affiliated with a Haitian Hometown Association, Haitian-Community Based Association or an association involved in the promotion of the interest of the Haitian-American community in Florida, particularly in Miami. The group of Haitian-American professionals was composed of three Haitian-Americans who held a specific knowledge in a particular field and provided professional services in the field in which he or she received such specialized training. The group of community members was composed of four Haitian-Americans who belonged to neither a Haitian Community-Based Organization, nor he or she was a professional.

For example, a member of the Haitian-American community who held a degree in Social Work was considered as a professional although that member worked as a social worker. However, if that same member did not work as a social worker, but was affiliated with an HTA, that member would have been eligible to be recruited as an organizational leader. If that same member neither worked as a social worker, nor was that member affiliated with an HTA, that member would have been eligible to participate as a community member.

Instrumentation

I developed an interview with open-ended questions to measure the phenomenon of political incorporation of Haitian immigrants in Florida, particularly in Miami (See Appendices A, B. C). An interview is a process through which researchers capture the knowledge, perceptions, and opinions of an individual or a group/subgroup of individuals (Creswell, 2013). Since interviews rely upon the knowledge of participants, I applied

content validity through which I aligned the research and the interview questions with the

phenomenon so the answers of the participants provided established sufficient data that

captured the lived experiences of the participants (Figure 1).
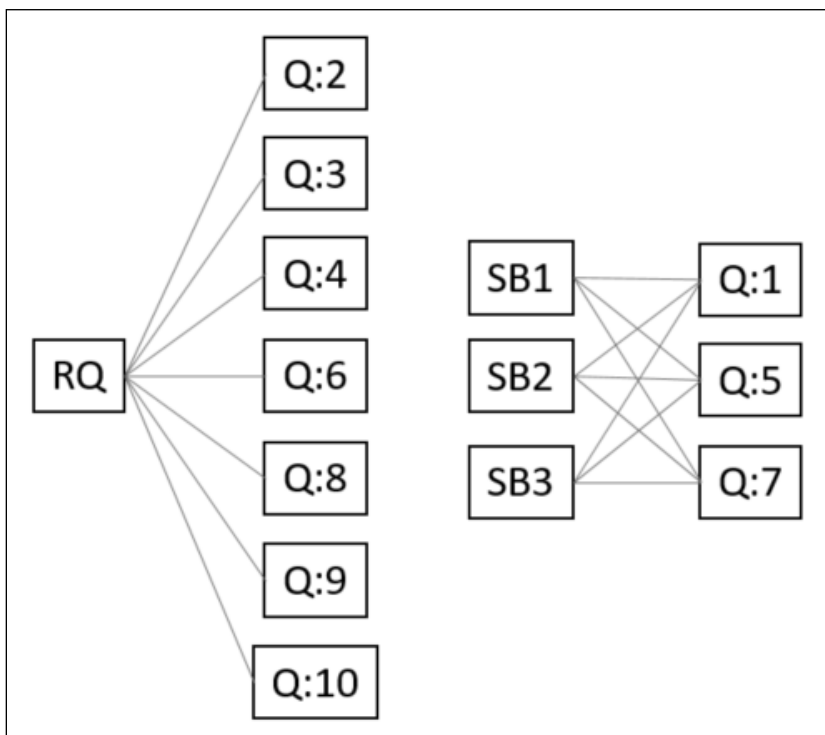
Figure 1. Mapping of the research questions to the interview questions.

Content validity ensures the instrument measures accurately what it is intended to

measure and that the results can be applied to other settings (Creswell, 2013). The

questions were formulated to answer all aspects of civic participation and community

engagement of Haitian immigrants so to provide a comprehensive landscape of factors

that the Haitian-American community perceived as factors hindering the incorporation of

Haitian immigrants in local politics and government.

Open-ended questions are designed to generate data around the research questions

to give participants opportunities to answer based on their lived experience and

understanding of the dynamics of expatriate community mobilization. I designed the

interview questions to ask about participants' experiences with political mobilization.

Example questions included: "What are your experiences with mobilizing Haitian

migrants in your community to get them involved in local politics?" and "What do you

believe are the biggest barriers to Haitian political mobilization in your community?" in

case of ambiguity or vagueness in the participants' responses, I asked probing questions

to prompt participants to expand on their answers. According to Preide, Jokinen,

Ruuskenen, and Farrall (2014), researchers ask probing questions to gain deeper insight

and informative feedback about a specific phenomenon.

Probing interview questions were not planned because it was impossible to

predict ambiguities that may derive from an answer or when a question may open the

door for an issue (Willis & Artenio, 2013). However, I used generic probing questions in

instances I had difficulties understanding some answers. I also used probing questions to

clarify ambiguity that appeared in the interview questions. My use of probing questions

depended on the clarity of participants' answers.

Examples of probes included: "Tell me more about that," "What eventually

happened," "Looking back, what would you do differently now, if anything," and "How

did the… respond to that?"

See Figure 1 for a mapping of the interview questions to the research questions.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Using a purposive sampling, the participants was recruited either by email that I

sent to their 11th Department's inbox or through a survey that I posted on the website to

request for participants. Both options are available free to members of the network. Although emails were not publicly available on the website, any user had the option to communicate using the site-messaging feature.

I visited the 11th Department website to conduct a search for members and organizations. I sent emails to the first 25 members and organizations. Although 25 emails were sent and although there was a survey asking for participants, I selected the first 3 leaders, the first 3 professionals and the first 4 community members who answered positively to the email. The emails and the survey request described the purpose of the study and the eligibility requirements to potential participants utilizing said network.

Once interested individuals contacted me, I emailed them to provide a one-page description of the study. I also attached a consent form to the email. They electronically signed the form and return it to me. I also included my phone number if they would require additional information before agreeing to participate. I scheduled interviews for the individuals who positively responded to the e-mail and who returned the consent form. I scheduled and conducted the interviews using a web video teleconference called Zoom Video Communications.

Zoom is a cloud-based video teleconference platform that facilitates online meetings with screen sharing capabilities (Maldow, 2013). Zoom allows users to setup a meeting calendar and send it to invitees. Zooms allows two-way video conferencing, audio recording, join by phone, and screen sharing capabilities. No camera is needed to use the screen sharing capabilities, but at least one camera is needed for video conferencing. My camera was turned on for the participants to see me. Participants chose

to turn theirs on and off as the two-way video feature was not be required for the interview. Adequate audio connections were required for the interviews.

Participants received an email containing the meeting ID, which they used to attend the conference. Using any laptop, smartphone, or tablet with an Internet connection, participants signed into the meeting by installing the Zoom application or a small executable adobe flash player file in order to view the Zoom icon, which appeared on the home screen of their device. Once installation was completed, the participant entered the Meeting ID onto a small box to join the live session.

Once the meeting started, I shared my screen with the participants. I displayed the signed consent form and had the participants affirm in the recorded audio that they had read and signed the form. After such affirmation, I placed information about the interview process. Information included the purpose of the study, length of the interview, number of questions, follow-up procedures, and their ability to end participation at any time during the interview.

I began the interview by showing each question, one by one, on the screen so the participant can read or refer to the question while answering. Once participants finished answered the question, the screen moved to the next question. After all questions were completed, a "debriefing' screen appeared where I thanked the participants, reminding them they would have an opportunity to review my transcription and provide feedback, and letting them know I would provide an electronic copy of the results to them via email.

There was one participant who did not have computer audio, but that participant ended using a smartphone to join the meeting. Participants viewed the consent form and the questions on the screen of their device while being interviewed. Four participants were recorded. I sent a copy of the recording to the six participants who did not record the interview so they could verify and validate what they reported during the interview. I saved the recordings of the interviews, which I used later of data analysis.

To enhance accuracy, credibility and validity, I performed two rounds of member checking. I sent a verbatim transcripts of the interview to the participants so they could verify and validate the authenticity of exactly what they said during the interview. For the second round of member checking, I sent the findings, which were my interpretations of participants' accounts of the phenomenon, to the participants. I provided further details of the second round of member checking in the "Issues of Trustworthiness" section of the research. Member checking is a nod of participation validation that provides participants another opportunity to analyze and comment (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). I applied the second round of member checking to compare my understanding of the transcripts of the interviews with that of the participants.

Data Analysis Plan

I imported the audio transcripts into Dedoose for the data analysis phase. Dedoose is a web-based program that allows researchers to analyze data in the forms of text, audio, video, and photos (Silver & Lewins, 2015). I applied the Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis method as the basis for the data analysis for my research. The Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis method facilitate the identification and analysis of

patterns of the qualitative data that was generated from the interviews. As suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), I used thematic analysis to identify themes that answered the research question and sub-questions.

The Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis method is a rigorous six-phase approach that involves data familiarization, initial code generalization, theme searching, theme reviewing, defining and renaming theme, and report production. After I imported the transcripts of the interviews onto Dedoose, I listened to the recording many times, so I could have a firm idea of what the transcripts contained. Listening to the recordings allowed me to immerse myself in and to be actively engaged in the data. Becoming familiar with the lived experiences of the participants provided me with a comprehensive foundation to produce a better analysis of the phenomenon. Initial codes were generated from a list of themes that emerged from the literature review.

After I familiarize myself with the data, I began to generate initial codes by establishing many meaningful groups to organize my data. By example, "immigration" was repeated many times, I made a group for that code and continued to add themes that reflect the code to that group. Other words like citizenship, residence, TPS, undocumented, refugees were added to the group "immigration." Van Patten and Jegerski (2010) and Walker (2012) called this step thematic hierarchy for it involves establishing relationships among themes as well as generating analytical themes.

Thereafter, I applied the winnowing phase through which I searched the collated codes to transform codes into potential themes for an interpretive analysis. Upon the discovery of new themes, I weighed the themes were to determine which ones were the

most relevant and the most appropriate to the study (Creswell, 2013). I continued the theme evaluation process to link themes together to determine how they related to the theoretical framework and determine how well they answered the central research question and the sub-questions.

In the next step, I reviewed the themes to establish relationships among the codes, subthemes, and themes. This step was a process of elimination through which, I chose which themes to review, combine, separate, or discard. I discarded the least repeated themes or themes that added no value to the interpretive analysis. I kept the themes that were repeated the most times or the themes that provided sufficient data to answer the central research question and the subquestions.

The themes were retained to be named, refined, and defined to capture how they related to the phenomenon of interest. At that point, I combined all themes to tell a unified story of the lived experiences of the participants. The report was a deep narrative analysis supported with empirical evidence that addressed the research questions**.**

The six phases combined allowed me to analyze and interpret subjective data and present the results in ways they could hold validity. The six-phase approach also helped me conduct a thorough analysis to discover how and why patterns occurred as well as develop themes and present results in a way that told the readers the story of the individuals who experienced the phenomenon.

Issues of Trustworthiness

I applied stringent measures to present data to ensure participation eligibility and that participants possess the interests, the knowledge, and the experiences of the

phenomenon under study. I made sure that the group of organizational leaders, professionals, and other community members were actively engaged in political and community activism to determine the impact of their efforts on the larger population's path to political incorporation. To ensure I selected the appropriate participants, I applied purposive sampling through which I addressed all issues of trustworthiness that had rose throughout the data analysis phase.

Credibility

In a phenomenological design, credibility is the extent that participants describe accurately their experiences and perceptions of a specific phenomenon (Van Manen, 2014). To achieve credibility, I established the truth of things through reflexology, which Houghton et al (2013) define as the researcher's ability to assume an observer as participant role to obtain inter-subjective data. I identified and set aside any personal biases as best as I could, to minimize undue influence in my interpretation of the data. I attempted to ensure credibility by performing two rounds of member checking. In the first round, participants listened to the audio interview so to allow them the opportunities to confirm or change their stories. In the second round, participants had the opportunities to review my interpretations of their lived experiences to ensure I recounted their stories the way they told them to me. I knew when I achieved credibility of the results when participants returned the transcripts of my narrative report with minor or without changes. Establishing credibility allowed me to present a true picture of the lived accounts of the participants in ways that my research findings were verifiable and transferable to other Haitian immigrant groups around the country.

Transferability

Transferability is the extent that the findings of ring true of other's experiences or that the findings can be applied to others in similar situations (Houghton et al., 2013). Haitians in other states are likely to experience the same political incorporation issues as Haitians in Florida (LeMay, 2012). I thoroughly analyzed the data so as to enable readers to relate and subsequently apply the findings to their situation. Jeanfreau (2010) stated transferability occurs when readers conclude that they are related to the findings for they have experienced similar situations.

In my study, transferability was the degree to which my findings could be generalized or applied to other Haitian immigrant community groups dispersed throughout the US. To enhance transferability or generalizability, I selected subject matter experts or individuals with first-hand knowledge of the Haitian immigrant community's path to incorporation into the Florida political mainstream. The participants I recruited from the 11th Department social network of Haitian professionals were subject matter experts, community organizers, political activists, members of Haitian Community-Based Organization, or professionals with the experiences and knowledge of community engagement and civic participation.

Moreover, I provided a thorough explication of the research context and central theme thorough analysis of the answers to allow Haitian immigrants in the US to understand and relate to the problem under study. Van Manen (2014) posited that transferability is not the responsibility of the researcher, but that of the readers. To ensure my findings resonated with other Haitian immigrants across the country, I recruited

Haitian-Americans who indeed experienced the phenomenon. I ensured the research and

the interview questions were formulated in ways to provide data regarding the

phenomenon of interest. My role was to provide highly detailed descriptions of the

research context and the assumptions that were central to the research.

Member Checking

Member checking is a validation technique that researchers utilize to determine

the credibility of findings. Member checking occurs when researchers return data or

results to participants to determine the level of participant's resonance with researcher's

interpretations of data collected from said participants (Brit et al., 2016). After the data

analysis, I emailed the results to the participants. I invited them to go through the findings

to provide feedback and to make changes where necessary. I applied this method to

determine whether my interpretations rang true with their original statement or resonated

with the experience participants shared with me. Their concurrence with my findings was

a nod of validation and a confirmation of their experience as a whole.

Dependability

Dependability is the extent other researchers under different circumstances can

replicate replicated a study (Houghton, Casey, Shawn, & Murphy, 2013). To increase

dependability, I described all the procedures and the steps in the data collection and data

analysis process in sufficient detail so that others researchers could replicate my study. I

enhanced dependability by applying emphatic validation, which Hughes and Hayhoe

(2008) defined as the notion that the researcher understands participant's feelings and

perspectives. Emphatic validation impacts dependability in the sense researchers will

likely tend to validate the participants' opinions or understanding of the phenomenon (Batchelder, Brosman & Ashwin, 2017). I also kept a researcher log to document my research experience and to make note of any issues that arise.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree that the results of a study are guided by the participants' responses rather than the biases and preconceptions of the researcher (Houghton et al, 2013). I applied reflexivity as a strategy to increase confirmability. Reflexivity occurs when a researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate (Malterud, 2001). To do so, I did my best to set aside my preconceived ideas about the Haitian immigrant community's political incorporation to approach the data analysis phase with an open perspective. Reflexivity is about being transparent and as such, during the data analysis, I ensured to remain neutral by focusing on what the participants said instead of what I think they said or what I would have wanted them to say based on what I knew already about the phenomenon. I remained conscious to produce a narrative report that focused on the needs or the circumstances instead of the needs of my ego or my perceptions. The unified story of the participants regarding barriers to civic participation of Haitian immigrants in Florida was the story of the participants; not mine and I was objective to ensure I reported the lived experiences, as they told them to me.

According to Houghton et al. (2013), confirmability relies on the quality of the results as described by the researcher. To enhance confirmability, I performed audit trails through which I presented a clear description of the research path from participant logic

selection and recruitment to findings development and reporting. My audit trails entailed

keeping records regarding of all the steps to conduct the analysis of the data analysis. I

also kept a log of all process and analysis notes, raw data, and preliminary development

information. Performing audit trails allowed me to have a record of how the study

unfolded. Creswell (2013) stated that audit trails give readers a systematic picture to

follow each stage of the process of the data analysis. Audit trails allow other researchers

to determine whether the findings of a study are reliable and replicable and whether these

findings can be used as a basis for decision-making (Carcary, 2009).

Ethical Procedures

After I obtained the IRB approval on November 17, 2017, I began to recruit

participants in keeping with the IRB checklist pertaining to integrity, fairness, privacy,

and confidentiality of the participants. My IRB approval number is 11-17-17-0311808.

After my initial contact, I explained to the participants the worthiness of the research and

the impact their participation would have in gaining a much greater understanding of the

conditions of Haitian immigrants in the State of Florida.

I reminded them that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw

from the study at any time. In fact, during the interview, they were briefed that at any

time during the process, they could leave the meeting by simply clicking on the button

that read "Leave Meeting." There was no repercussion or reprisals to leave the meeting.

Participants were afforded ample time to reply to the emails I sent to them. There was no

deadline to reply so to avoid influencing the decision of the prospective participants.

In the recruiting materials, I avoided making an unbiased presentation of the study. I instead focused on stating purpose of the study and the significance of their participation. I did not make the research attractive by offering gifts or money to the participants. I did not make any promises to the participants. Specifically, I told them that their interviews were to be kept confidential and anonymous. Their names would never be associated with the research. The IRB approval number was listed in all the correspondences between the participants and me.

I asked the participants to read and sign an informed consent form to indicate their agreement to participate. The informed consent form ensured that participants understand the purpose of the study, their role in the process, and their rights as participants. Specifically, the informed consent included a full disclosure statement on the goals and the benefits of the study and how and to whom I reported the data I collected from the participants.

The sampling methods ensured that I recruited the appropriate individuals to participate in the study. Anyone who used the website met the criteria was eligible for participation, but I only recruited 10 individuals to equally represent the three subgroups of my study. I did not select participants who were my close friends, coworkers, or who were members of my family so to avoid recruiting individuals who could have felt a sense of obligation to participate in the study or individuals upon whom I could influence.

The recordings of the interviews were saved onto a thumb drive. The files will not be saved under any participant's name so to protect the confidentiality of the patient.

They were filed using a naming convention that went as such: PolIncHAIntone-00/00/2017. Pol was for political, Inc was for incorporation, HA is for Haitian-American, one was for the sequence of the interview, and the date was for the date the interview was conducted.

The files were password protected so to prevent unwanted accesses by others who may be using my laptop or in case my laptop was lost or stolen. The files can only be accessed by me and were only shared during member checks. I will store the files for five years, after which, they will be destroyed..

The findings may have the potential to be transferred to other settings and contexts. In simpler terms, I ensured that the results would be beneficial and that they would increase the knowledge of the Haitian-American community's path to political incorporation. The potential benefits were included in the email invitations as well as in the informed consent. To administer the interviews, I applied the ethical guideline checklist developed by the IRB. The IRB ethical guideline provides enforceable rules for researchers to ensure the integrity of research while protecting the privacy, the anonymity, and the confidentiality of the participants as well as the respect for people's rights and dignity (Brinthaup, 2002 ; Oakes, 2002 ; Miles et al (2014 ; Resnik, 2015).

Summary

This chapter contained the details of the study methodology. I applied a qualitative approach and a phenomenological methodology because central purpose of the research was to understand the lived experiences of Haitian-Americans regarding their involvement, or lack thereof, in the Florida political mainstream. To gain such

knowledge, I interviewed ten Haitian-Americans who were either professionals or members of HHAs. Throughout the interview, I assumed an observer as participant role to reduce the introduction of my preconceived ideas or prior knowledge of the phenomenon of interest. My responsibilities were to establish strategies to empower the reader to assign worth and value to the research. Although the answers may be subjective, the analysis of the findings was based on a neutral interpretation of the data on how to engage in political activities in Florida to generate the applicability of the findings in other contexts. In so doing, I remained focused on consistency and repeatability. I also remained focused on maintaining a high degree of neutrality in a way that reduced my biases or preconceived ideas. I described potential issues of trustworthiness and all standards to achieve credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability and explained relevant strategies to meet these standards. I concluded the methodology chapter by explaining ethical procedures for data collection and data analysis.

In the following chapter, I provided a summary of my findings according to the descriptions that the participants provided. Throughout data interpretation, I ensured to synthesize the research questions with the data that I collected from members of the Haitian immigrant community in the State of Florida.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

My purpose in this phenomenological study was to describe the perceptions

and experience of the members of the Haitian-American community in Florida related

to their incorporation into local politics and government. I applied a phenomenological

approach because I wanted to capture rich and insightful descriptions of the

phenomenon. I explored the perceived factors that prevented Haitian immigrants from

being involved in their community political life. I used in-depth interviews with open-

ended questions to gather data from four community members, three professional and

three organizational leaders. The participants were all Haitian-Americans living in

Miami, Florida, for at least 10 years. In this chapter, I describe the data analysis and

present the results of the study. I addressed the following central research question and

subquestions:

Central Research Question**:** What were the factors perceived by the members of

the Haitian-American community that appear to hinder Haitian immigrants from

incorporating effectively into politics at local, state, and federal levels?

Subquestion 1**:** What were the lived experiences and perceptions

of expatriate Haitian political leaders related to the barriers and impediments to political

mobilization at local, state, and federal levels?

Subquestion 2: What were the lived experiences and perceptions

of expatriate Haitian business and community leaders related to the barriers and

impediments to political mobilization at local, state, and federal levels?

Subquestion 3**:** What are the lived experiences of perceptions of expatriate Haitian community members who are recent citizens related to the barriers and impediments to political mobilization at local, state, and federal levels?

Subquestion 4: What are the perceptions of the Haitian-American community in Florida regarding how U.S. elected officials of Haitian descent influence changes in immigration and U.S. humanitarian aid to Haiti policies?

Setting

I conducted the interviews using a web-based audio video platform called Zoom. Once the invitees agreed to participate, I sent to them the link to download Zoom with information to join the meeting. Except for one participant who had a television playing in the background and one who had a barking dog, the atmosphere for the interviews was distraction free. The participants did not have any difficulty logging in to the platform. There were no objections to being recorded. Using Zoom provided a great benefit of privacy and confidentiality to the participants because Zoom required no sign up. Thus, the participants did not have to provide their name, their email address, or their phone number. Another benefit of using Zoom was that I was able to share my screen with the participants. The participants were able to see the questions on their screen before and while they were answering them. After the interviews, I emailed the respective audio recordings to the participants so each participant could review and approve what they had reported during the interview. I recruited from all segments of the Haitian-American community in order to have a diverse demography of the population of Haitian immigrants in Florida.

Demographics

To ensure confidentiality, I protected participants' identities by omitting all references or identifiers in the audio recordings. There is no direct reference to individuals' names, professions, organizations, places of employment, email addresses, or job titles. I interviewed 10 participants during a 1-month period with an average of three interviews a week. I purposively identified the sample on the 11th Department online network of Haitian professionals. Seven participants were males and three were females. I stratified participants into three groups of three professionals, four community members, and three organizational leaders.

The four community members who participated in the study had been residing in Florida for 30 years in average, but only one had ever voted in local elections. One community member was involved in local politics although never voted while the other two community members were never involved in local politics. The four community members did not know if there was any U.S.-elected official with the Haitian background in the Florida Legislature. All ten participants knew or had heard about the Mayor of North Miami who was a Haitian born. The community members were older and came to the country as adults.

The professional and organizational leaders who participated in my study either were born or were brought to the United States as children. Their political experience ranged between 10 to 25 years. They all have voted and claimed they were familiar with the U.S. political process. They were active in advocating for Haitian immigrants through writing and signing petitions and organizing protests against TPS.

They claimed they had organized many community events to energize the Haitian electoral base and to teach Haitian immigrants civic and literacy skills.

Data Collection

The interviews lasted 30 minutes on average. I recorded all interviews with permission from each participant. I ensured that all topics of political incorporation relevant to the study were covered by asking probing questions when appropriate as recommended by Preide et al. (2014). I used open-ended and probing questions (Appendix A) to guide the discussions and to provide participants the opportunity to discuss issues that were important (Van Manen, 2014).

I performed two rounds of member checking for accuracy. I asked participants to verify and validate the data transcribed from the interviews. In the first round of member checking, I sent the audio files to the participants and I asked them to review them to ensure the recordings related exactly what they intended to convey. I gave the participants the opportunity to change their answers where or if necessary. I asked each participant to reply to my email with the statement "I have reviewed the audio of the interview and the statements therein are accurate."

In the second round of member checking, I sent a transcript of my findings to the participants. I asked them to read and review the transcripts to ensure that my findings conveyed their perceptions, their experience and their knowledge of the phenomenon. The two rounds of member checking allowed me to avoid misinterpretations or over interpretations of the data reported by the participants. I

uploaded the participant verified and validated audio recording onto Dedoose for data

analysis.

Data Analysis

I applied the six-phase thematic analysis method formulated by Braun and

Clarke (2006) as the guide to analyze the data I collected from the 10 participants. In

the first phase, I listened to the audio recordings several times while withholding my

prior political incorporation's knowledge and experience. The purpose of the first

phase was to become familiar with the data and to ensure that I explored the

phenomenon, as the participants knew and experienced it (Van Manen, 2014).

In the second and third phases, I generalized initial codes by extracting

significant statements or statements that were directly related to the phenomenon. I

arranged the codes into groups of codes and each group of codes were later collated to

be transformed into potential themes to establish a thematic hierarchy as well as

conduct an interpretive analysis (Van Patten & Jegerski, 2010; Walker, 2012). I coded

meaningful statements into themes using nodes in Dedoose. I used the auto code

function to classify the participants' responses into nodes according to the interview

questions and subquestions.

I checked each expression relevant to each participant experience for their

relationship with the purpose statement and the research and subquestions of the study.

This process facilitated the emergence and the identification of new themes and

subthemes. Once I confirmed that no new data emerged or revealed, I weighted and

linked the themes together to determine which ones were repeated the most and which ones were the most aligned with the purpose of the study.

In the fourth and fifth phases, I reviewed the themes to eliminate the ones that did not add value to the interpretive analysis or that did not provide sufficient data to answer the research question and the subquestions.

In the sixth phase, I wrote an exhaustive and unified story of the data collected. I wrote the findings in the forms of verbatim statements, meanings, nodes, themes, and summary to report the story of the individuals who experienced the phenomenon so readers, especially other groups of immigrants in other U.S. states, could feel related to the story.

The six-phase thematic analysis method provided me the necessary tools and knowledge to understand the data and to present the findings in ways that will make sense to readers.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

As I mentioned in Chapter 3, I took several steps to ensure evidence of trustworthiness in this phenomenological study. My focus was to ensure I was in fact analyzing the data I collected. I ensured also that the data I collected answered the research and the sub questions. Moreover, I ensured that the participants represented the different segments of Haitian-American community, and that the participants validated my interpretations of the data I collected from them.

Before I engaged in any recruitment and interviews, I submitted the interview questions and the consent form to Walden University's IRB. I obtained IRB approval

on November 17, 2017. To achieve trustworthiness, as stated by Creswell (2013), I applied the standards of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as the main criteria to verify my conclusions.

Credibility

I was aware of the risks of misinformation that could temper with the data analysis due to the subjectivity related to participants having different experience and different knowledge of political incorporation of the Haitian-American community. Thus, to ensure I collected the most relevant data and that I recruited the most appropriate sample, I applied a purposeful sampling and member checking as tools to achieve credibility.

During the recruiting phase, I selected participants who exhibited evidence of having rich experience and deep knowledge of the phenomenon (Van Manen, 2014). I visited the profile pages of 25 prospective participants on the 11th Department online network to form an idea of their background and their works in the community. Out of 25 individuals who responded affirmatively to my invitation to participate in the study, I selected ten who I felt could provide the most pertinent and honest information regarding the phenomenon.

Before the interviews, as suggested by Miles et al (2014), I engaged in personal conversations about the Haitian diaspora as a whole with each participant to provide a relaxing environment. The personal conversations allowed me to confirm that the participants had indeed experience and were knowledgeable of the issues facing by Haitian immigrants in Florida.

Furthermore, to enhance credibility and to reduce personal biases, the IRB and two expert panels at Walden University reviewed the research questions, the interview questions and the interview protocol. I performed two rounds of member checking to provide participants the opportunities to review what they had reported and to validate the interpretations of what they had reported during the interviews. I sent to each participant their respective audio file three hours after the initial interview and three days after I concluded the preliminary data analysis phase.

I also maintained a detailed audit trail of the data collected. I adhered to direct quotes from the participants to ensure that the findings and data were objectively gathered. Although the sample selected for my study was relatively small, I reached saturation to provide an accurate and rich description of research findings.

Transferability

I conducted this data analysis in way for other researchers to generalize and replicate my findings across other diaspora groups living in Florida and other U.S. states. For this purpose, I recorded my research activities in a word document into which I typed events that occurred, actions that I took in these circumstances, deadlines, milestones, interview schedules, length of each interview, and my personal experiences throughout the interviewing process. The Word document, which I used as my reflexive journal, allowed me to describe in detail each step of the research methodology provided the basis of strong evidence to substantiate my analysis of the data I collected from the participants. Keeping a trail of my activities enabled me to record a vivid description of participants' experiences and offered transparency in the analysis of the data.

I addressed transferability by providing clear descriptions of the sample and data collection procedures, as well as providing textual excerpts directly from the interview audio transcripts. The results of my study could be transferred to other researchers with the use of information to explore other possible obstacles or how these obstacles negatively affected immigrant incorporation into governments and US politics. In addition, the study provided ample knowledge to gain a thorough understanding of social and institutional barriers that Haitian immigrants were facing regarding their incorporation into local politics and government. I obtained informed consent from each participant along with the assurances of confidentiality and anonymity.

Dependability

Dependability occurs in the interpretation of participants' statements and personal opinions during a consistent analysis of the interview transcripts (Miles et al. 2014). Personal biases and preconceived ideas may have an adverse impact on data analysis. This is why Creswell (2013) recommended that researchers immerse themselves into the study to become familiar with the amount of data collected in order to better transcribe the interviews and to code reliably the data. I became familiar with the data first by conducting extensive research on the situations Haitian immigrants and second by listening and re-listening the audio files. I also stored all my sources and archived all the steps so the process may be reproduced eventually using the data and the sources compiled and collected. I achieved dependability through the detailed and clear description of the study from problem identification to data analysis.

Confirmability

I obtained confirmability through the member checking technique, which allowed me to establish openness and to gain trust and full cooperation of the participants. Member checking also allowed me to give participants the opportunities to challenge my interpretations of their statements (Miles et al., 2014). I also obtained confirmability by avoiding subjectivity in the interpretation of data. I had put aside any prior knowledge of the phenomenon to generate accurate findings and to formulate conclusions that had implications for social change. I also performed audit trails to support confirmability (Creswell, 2013). The data collected, which included the recordings of each interview and all the transcripts will be available for a minimum of 5 years.

<div align="center">

Results

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In this chapter, I report the findings according to the central research question, subquestions, and themes. I report the themes individually but one theme could be attributed to more than one response or one response could be attributed to more than on theme. The central research question addressed the participant's perceptions regarding the factors that appear to hinder Haitian immigrants from incorporating effectively into politics at local, state, and federal levels. Thematic analysis revealed communication, leadership, language, and immigration as perceived barriers that generated a lack of interest, a poor knowledge of US politics, a low engagement, and a weak commitment of Haitian immigrants to local political and nonpolitical activities. The statements of the participants provided ample descriptions to answer questions two, three, four, six, eight, and nine to eleven of the interview.

The first, second, and third research subquestions addressed the lived experiences and the perceptions of expatriate Haitian political leaders, Haitian business and community leaders, and Haitian community members who are recent citizens related to the barriers and impediments to political mobilization at local, state, and federal levels. The themes that emerged from the analysis were immigration, civic education, leadership and the absence of a unified and cohesive strategy to strength the voice of the entire Haitian diaspora. Those themes appeared to have led to a poor political presence of Haitian immigrants in their community's electoral and non-electoral activities as well as a weak political weight of Haitian migrants in local politics and government.

The fourth research subquestion addressed the perceptions of the Haitian-American community in Florida regarding how U.S. elected officials of Haitian descent influence changes in immigration and U.S. humanitarian aid to Haiti policies. Thematic analysis revealed themes related to policy responsiveness, underrepresentation, and the absence of outreach activities to reach the Haitian-American community at large. The Haitian-American community in Florida lacked the basic knowledge about the mission of US elected officials of Haitian descent related to the plight of Haitian immigrants in the United States especially in Florida (Wiltz, 2014).

According to Lucien (2015), members of Haitian-American community received more support from community leaders, political activists, and Haitian-American professionals than they received from the elected officials with the Haitian

background. Moreover, members of Haitian-American community were not too active

in their community public life (Rigueur, 2012). Wiltz (2014) stated that Haitian-

Americans either did not vote or did not register to vote because they did not accord

too much significance to local elections. The statements the participants provided

ample descriptions to answer Questions 1, 5, and 7 of the interview.

Table 1 presents the themes and subthemes according to each research and sub

question.

Table 1

Themes and Corresponding Summaries

Research question and subquestions	Themes	Summary
RQ: What were the factors perceived by the members of the Haitian-American community that appear to hinder Haitian immigrants from incorporating effectively into politics at local, state, and federal levels?	Immigration Language Leadership Communication	All 10 participants expressed that because the majority of Haitian were either residents or undocumented, they were not too focused on U.S. politics. Their primary concern was job and becoming U.S. citizens to speed their immigration request to be united with their family who were still back home. Immigration status prevented many Haitian immigrants from getting involved in politics.
SQ1: What were the lived experiences and perceptions of expatriate Haitian political leaders related to the barriers and impediments to political mobilization at local, state, and federal levels?	Immigration Civic education Communication Leadership Collaboration	Seven of the 10 participants expressed that the Haitian American was not civically literate, which prevented them from getting involved in local politics.
SQ2: What were the lived experiences and perceptions of expatriate Haitian business and community leaders related to the barriers and impediments to political mobilization at local, state, and federal levels?	Immigration Civic education Communication Collaboration	Five of the 10 participants noted that the Haitian leadership was not doing a great job communication their agenda to the Haitian community.
SQ3: What were the lived experiences of perceptions of expatriate Haitian community members who are recent citizens related to the barriers and impediments to political mobilization at local, state, and federal levels?	Communication Immigration Civic education	Six of the 10 participants stated that it was easier for their children to become involved in U.S. politics because they were not facing the same immigration and language barriers they, themselves, did face when they first arrived in the country.

SQ4: What were the perceptions of the Haitian-American community in Florida regarding how U.S. elected officials of Haitian descent influence changes in immigration and U.S. humanitarian aid to Haiti policies?	Communication Responsiveness Outreach Underrepresentation	Six of the 10 participants expressed that as long the Haitian-American community was composed of several clicks of people with different personalities, it would be almost impossible for Haitian immigrants to influence changes in immigration and U.S. humanitarian aid to Haiti policies

Theme 1: Immigration

All ten participants noted immigration as the perceived factor that prevented Haitian immigrants in Florida, especially the older generations, from effectively getting involved in politics at the local, state, and federal levels. They mentioned that the majority of Haitians living in Florida were either undocumented or not legal residents. The few who were legal residents or green card holders were waiting to become US citizens to begin to get involved in US politics. The majority of Haitian immigrants who became naturalized citizens were not registered to vote and few of them who were registered to vote, indeed, did not vote (Wiltz, 2014).

A participant mentioned that Haitians came late into the political game because they had to wait five years after they became legal to become US citizens and to begin to be politically involved. Another participant stated that if Haitians did not have to go through the waiting period or if Haitians had the same advantages as the Cubans, the Haitian-American community could have been by now a strong political force. The Wet Foot Dry Foot is an immigration policy that essentially prevented the United States from

deporting Cubans who fled Cuba to enter the United States. (Menchaca, 2015). Bedolla (2015) stated that the Wet Foot Dry Foot policy allowed newly arrived Cubans to pursue the US residency a year later.

The organizational leaders I interviewed for my study stated Haitians did not know what their immigration status entitled them to do in America. They said when they invited Haitians to attend community events, they claimed they were either illegal or were not US citizens. Organizational leaders spent countless of hours explaining and convincing Haitian immigrants that political engagement did not only include registering to vote and voting; it also involved protesting, donating or donating to campaigns and mostly protesting and demonstrating to take a public stand against unfair immigration policies. "Therefore, we must begin to educate them before we can begin to mobilize them," a professional leader stated.

Two of the Haitian-American professionals stated that the Haitian leadership was failing on teaching Haitian immigrants civic and literacy skills to empower them become involved and to make intelligent political decisions. Two of the community members expressed that Haitian immigrants needed to know about immigration especially how and where to file for residence, TPS, and political asylum as well as the advantages that come with being here in America.

Theme 2: Language

All ten participants mentioned that, in addition to their immigration status (undocumented, legal residents, not naturalized citizens), Haitian immigrants faced a language barrier, which prevented them from understanding US politics. "It is not that we

do not speak English; it is that we do not speak it well enough to understand the language of the U.S. political system," expressed a community member.

The participants noted that because of their immigration status and their lack of fluency in the English language, Haitian immigrants did not try to understand the U.S. political process. Instead, they remained focused on jobs and saving money to remit to their loved ones back in Haiti. The three organizational leaders expressed that, because Haitian immigrants showed a low level of interests in their community life, the Haitian-American community had no political presence in local politics and no political weight in U.S. politics.

Six participants, notably the organizational and the professional leaders, expressed that second and third generations of Haitian immigrants were quicker to incorporate into local politics because they grew up speaking English and learning the U.S. political system. They did not face the same issues their parents did. A participant said that younger generations were born here and their parents did their best to provide them a better education. They grew up within the network their parents had built and did not have to worry about sending money to Haiti after they started working. Another participant mentioned that younger Haitians were more likely to learn English and Haitian immigrants who spoke English were more likely to participate in politics.

All ten participants cited that the lack of fluency in English had led to an unsuccessful political engagement of the Haitian-American community as well as a political attachment to their community public life. The first generation of Haitian immigrants is not politically active whereas the second and third generations are highly

politically active because they do not have the same physiological needs as they parents

did when they first come to America. A community member stated that the older

generation of Haitian immigrants had been victim of prejudice and discrimination since

the first day they arrived in the country. Such a prejudice compelled them to focus, not on

politics, but on getting as many jobs as they could to save money to remit home (Lucien,

2015). Another community member expressed that politics was the last thing on the

minds of Haitians who did not become U.S. citizens to be eligible to vote, but to place

themselves on a quicker path to apply for residence for their children.

Theme 3: Civic Education

All ten participants expressed that the Haitian-American community in Florida

lacked adequate literacy skills to understand the U.S. policy system and thus the reason

Haitian immigrants were not engaged in political and community activities. Six

participants noted that the Haitian leadership was to blame for failing to launch civic

actions, teach literateness, and promote social cohesion among Haitian immigrants in the

United States, especially in Florida.

Without a civic education construct, Haitian immigrants do not know how to get

involved in their community as well as to gain and develop knowledge, skills, values and

motivation to build a mature and attractive political force (Pierre-Louis, 2013).

According to Wiltz (2014), without the proper literacy skills, Haitian immigrants are

slow to integrate into the larger U.S. social fabric and, therefore, were unable to grasp the

basic concepts of their commitment toward the community through civic, political, and

non-political activities.

The three organizational leaders, a professional, and a community member stated that the lack of civic education confined the Haitian American on only defending or attempting to resolve immigration problems while they ignored to focus on educating Haitians so they could become familiar with alternative approaches to voice their opinions. "Protests and demonstrations are not the only means of getting heard; attending town hall and city council meetings, knowing their candidates, reaching to their representatives, and donating and volunteering to campaigns are also great means to get involved in politics," a Haitian-American professional noted.

Theme 4: Leadership

All ten participants noted that the various Haitian community-based organizations, hometown associations, and professional associations were working as separate entities. They observed that many individuals in the Haitian Americans were venting on their accomplishment but were failing collectively because of personal egos and agenda derived from an unorganized Haitian-American community.

The participants expressed that there was lack of trust among Haitian immigrants. "Nothing can be done without a minimum trust," one participant stated. They stated that Haitian immigrants had to work toward restore trust among them prior doing anything. They expressed that the Haitian leadership was composed of clicks of people with different personalities and different agendas and who were more concerned about boosting their ego.

The participants stated there was no show of common force in the Haitian leadership. They further stated that although Haitian immigrants were unified around

the TPS issue, each organization were in it for themselves because they did not come together to send one message that could have driven, more effectively, the point of TPS beneficiaries to Washington. These organizations just happened to be at the same place at the same time.

The participants perceived an emotional outburst where individual and groups were reacting on their own way instead of providing a unified response. To provide a unified response and to become a mature political force, the Haitian leadership must be organized (Wiltz, 2014).

The participants expressed that the Haitian leadership was not active, except during election campaigns, in motivating Haitian immigrants to be engaged in the public sphere of their community. The Haitian leadership was not active in mobilizing Haitian immigrants toward building a presence and making their voice heard to influence government actions in Florida, especially in healthcare, education and immigration programs.

Due to an ineffective leadership, the Haitian-American community lacks the educational, political and social framework to strengthen and boost civic participation and citizen engagement they needed to grow as a political force as well as to increase their political value in the Florida's political mainstream (Rigueur, 2012).

Theme 5: Underrepresentation

The four community members expressed they did not know who the US elected officials with the Haitian background, let alone, their representatives were. The three Haitian-American professionals and the three organizational leaders noted that the US

elected officials with the Haitian background were not elected to represent only Haitian immigrants but all Americans living in Florida. They further mentioned that US elected officials with the Haitian background were in minority and therefore they were, unless they made alliances with other US elected officials with other foreign backgrounds, unable to influence legislation for the Haitian-American constituency.

A participant voiced that the Haitian-American community was underrepresented in local politics because Haitian immigrants were not interested in local politics and as whole did not vote. Another participant expressed that it was impossible for US elected officials of Haitian descent or even the representatives to represent and defend the interests of a group that was so politically unstructured and unattractive.

Theme 6: Communication

Eight out of the ten participants posited that there was a sharp disconnect among the various Haitian Community Based Organizations. That sharp disconnect existed also between Haitian Community Based Organizations and US elected officials of Haitian descent. It further existed between the Haitian constituency and US elected officials of Haitian descent. According to the participants, community leaders did not share information among them nor did they pass out information to the community of Haitian immigrants in Florida, US elected officials of Haitian descent were not reaching out to community leaders to inform them of social programs they envisioned for the community.

The participants expressed a lack of dialogue or a communication channel for Haitian immigrants to express their needs and their concerns regarding the performances

of their political leaders. They further expressed that he Haitian-American community in Florida functioned as clicks of individuals with strong egos, competing interests, and disparate personalities.

The participants noted that the Haitian Community Based Organizations were not taking advantage of the social networks to reach out to Haitian immigrants. Thus, the reason Haitian protests, even those for the TPS extensions failed to unite a big number of Haitian immigrants. Many of these organizations do not have a web presence; they are active only in times of protests that reunited few hundred Haitians (Lucien, 2015).

The participants noted that Haitian immigrants must begin to work together and collaboratively if they wish to make difference in future elections.

Theme 7: Outreach

Seven participants complained of a lack of outreach activities by the Haitian leadership to disseminate ideas and practices and to connect Haitian organizations and Haitian businesses along with their services with the population. In fact, Haitian immigrants were not familiar with the philosophy and mission of the myriad of Haitian community-based associations (Rigueur, 2012).

Theme 8: Responsiveness

All ten participants expressed that their representatives were not responsive to the needs of the Haitian-American community nor did they defend the Haitian case before the state legislature. Such policy unresponsiveness was related to Haitian immigrants not representing an attractive political force due to not having a political presence and a political weight in the community (Wiltz, 2014).

Theme 9: Collaboration

Nine participants expressed that the Haitian leadership is spontaneous who rose when there was a problem or a situation to be fixed or each time someone said something bad about Haiti. The participants stated that most of the Haitian leaders were the product of a situation who previously were simple community members. The internet had provided many opportunities for Haitian immigrants with the most friends, fans or with the most to become leaders except these leaders spoke one time about a situation and never followed up.

The participants noted that the Haitian leadership was failing in accompanying the community in protests because the leadership was unorganized without a "go to war" plan to address the immigration issues. The participants further noted that the Haitian leadership must come out as one to get Haitian immigrants out of their zone of their zone of comfort because Haitian immigrants felt they were too happy with a job, a social security number, or a green card. Moreover, they expressed that the Haitian leadership must stop being reactive, the community needed a proactive leadership; a leadership with a plan.

Summary

In this phenomenological study, I investigated perceived factors that prevented the Haitian-American community in Florida from getting active to increase their value in the Florida political mainstream. Ten participants, all living in Miami, FL and representing different segments of the Haitian-American community participated in interviews with open-ended questions regarding their perceptions, experiences, and

knowledge of Haitian's political incorporation in Florida. During data analysis, eight themes emerged from the thematic analysis, which I used to address the research question and the four sub research questions. In Chapter 5, I present a summary and interpretation of the findings, which I will compare and contrast to current literature about immigrant political incorporation. I will also describe implications for social change, recommendations for further study, and my experiences in the process.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

In this qualitative phenomenological study, I explored barriers that prevented Haitian Americans in Florida from being politically mobilized to incorporate into politics and government at local, state, and federal levels. Capturing the lived experiences and the perceptions of 10 participants, I portrayed the Haitian-American community as a political minority with the abilities to increase their political value, attract lawmakers, sway results of presidential elections, and influence U.S. immigration and humanitarian aid to Haiti policies. It filled the gap in previous literature as well as in the current political climate that depicted Haitian immigrants as a burden on the shoulders of the United States, as having AIDS, and from a "shit-hole" country. In this chapter, I present a summary and interpretations of the findings in relation to the process of minority political incorporation theory and that to peer-reviewed research. I also present the limitations of the study. I then recommend subject areas for further research and implications for positive social change.

Summary of Findings

My study captured the barriers to the incorporation of Haitian immigrants into politics in Florida. The central research question investigated the factors perceived by professionals, organizational leaders, and members of the Haitian-American community that appear to hinder Haitian immigrants from incorporating effectively into politics at local, state, and federal levels.

The first three subquestions explored the lived experiences and perceptions of political, business and community leaders, and community members who were recent citizens related to the barriers to their political mobilization at local, state, and federal levels. The fourth subquestion examined the perceptions of the Haitian-American community in Florida regarding how U.S. elected officials of Haitian background influenced changes in immigration and U.S. humanitarian aid policies for Haiti.

I recruited and interviewed 10 Haitian Americans. I stratified the participants into three groups to capture the different segments of the Haitian-American community as a whole. The main criteria for eligibility was that participants resided in Miami for at least three years and that they had experienced and were knowledgeable of the plight of Haitian immigrants in relation to their political incorporation.

The first group was composed of four community members. In the context of my study, community members were Haitian Americans who lived in the community, but did not have a leadership position. They were neither professionals, nor did they belong to any Haitian community-based organization. The second group was composed of three professionals, Haitian Americans who provided services in the community in their field of expertise. Lawyers, doctors, nurses, social workers, and engineers were recruited to represent professionals. The third group was composed of community leaders. Also called organizational leaders, community leaders were considered to be those Haitian Americans who were in a leadership position in the community regardless of their level of education. Members of Haitian community-based associations, political activists, community organizers, teachers, preachers, and radio hosts were recruited as community

leaders. The three community leaders recruited for my study belonged to a Haitian community-based organization.

A Haitian American who had a degree in law but was not practicing law was not eligible to participate as a professional because a professional had to provide services to the community in his or her field of expertise. However, if such a Haitian American belonged to a HCBA, he or she was eligible to be recruited as a community leader. Moreover, if such Haitian American was neither providing services, nor did he or she belong to any Haitian organization, he or she was only eligible to be recruited as a community member. Haitian community-based organization was referred to as any type of activities that reunited more than two Haitian immigrants to discuss political ideas for their community.

The key findings resulting from the analysis of participants' responses revealed nine interrelated themes: collaboration, immigration, language, civic education, leadership, communication, underrepresentation, outreach, and responsiveness. According to the participants, these themes were the barriers that impeded the effective community engagement and political activism of Haitian immigrants in Florida.

All 10 participants expressed the view that because the majority of Haitian immigrants living in Florida were either residents or undocumented, they demonstrated low levels of interest in U.S. politics. The primary concern of Haitian immigrants was work and the process of becoming a U.S. citizen to improve the prospects of bringing to the U.S. their family members still in Haiti.

Seven out of the 10 participants expressed the view that the Haitian-American community was not civically literate, which prevented them from getting involved in local politics. Five out of the ten participants noted that the Haitian leadership was not doing a great job communicating their agenda to the Haitian community. Six out of the 10 participants stated that it was easier for their children to become involved in U.S. politics because they did not face the same immigration and language barriers they, themselves, faced when they first arrived in the country. Six out the 10 participants noted that, as long the Haitian-American community was composed of several cliques, it would be almost impossible for Haitian immigrants to influence changes in immigration and U.S. humanitarian aid to Haiti policies. Nine participants stated that the Haitian leadership was too reactive, too emotional, too spontaneous, and too unfocused.

Applying the Theoretical Framework to the Findings

The theoretical framework is a practical guide that allows researchers to determine whether an approach to solving a research problem or answering a research question is feasible (Lederman & Lederman, 2015). Creswell (2013) discussed the theoretical framework as a means to complement, extend, or verify research findings. Grant and Ossanlo (2014) described a theoretical framework as the most important aspect of the research process for it provides the logical guide to create, design, and the blueprint of the research. The theoretical framework designs and shapes the study Charmaz (2011).

I applied the process of minority political incorporation that Marschall and Mikulska (2013) developed to explain how Blacks were mobilized to incorporate into Louisiana's political mainstream. The theory, moreover, explored how those Black

Americans achieved electoral success, especially areas where they were the least represented and political areas where they were the most represented. Marschall and Mikulska (2013) explored candidate emergence, electoral success, progressive political ambition, and substantive representation as four stages of the process of minority political incorporation. Although the process of political incorporation focused on Black Americans in Louisiana, the stages were consistent with the conditions of Haitian immigrants in the sense Haitian Americans in Florida faced many of the same issues as Black Americans in Louisiana. The absence of Haitian immigrants on the political scene led to a low voter turnout because Haitian Americans did not demonstrate the progressive political ambitions to emerge as candidates and as voters who are engaged toward making electoral successes (Wiltz, 2015).

Candidate Emergence

Participants in the study clearly indicated that there were challenges in candidate emergence in the Haitian-American community. The participants stated there was a great need for the Haitian-American community to identify Haitian Americans who had the competencies to run for office and to unite the Haitian American under one political agenda, regardless of immigration status and political affiliation. The lack of candidate emergence was underscored during the writing of this chapter as the Trump administration declined to renew the Temporary Protective Status for 60,000 Haitians displaced by the earthquake of January 12, 2010.

These facts fit the analysis of de Graauw (2014), Hoschschild et al. (2013), Lafleur (2015), Morales (2011), Rigueur (2012), and Wah (2013) who advanced the view

that candidate who emerged from minority or immigrant group was the result of the political mobilization of such minority or immigrant group. These facts also fit the analysis of Ramakrishnan (2013) who contend that political mobilization provided immigrants the adequate resources to identify, within their group, the individual or individuals who can represent them in elections or candidates with the most progressive political ambitions.

Moreover, these facts fit the study of Alba and Foner (2011), Bhojwani (2014), and Morales (2011) who expressed that minority or an immigrant group with candidate emergence clearly demonstrated the political competencies and the organizational skills to influence and shift policymaking. Candidate emergence would have sent the signals to the US government that the Haitian-American community was a reliable, attractive, and growing voting bloc.

Participants to the study mentioned that the Haitian-American community has the essential skills and the competencies necessary to be an attractive political force, but the community lacked true and active political leaders. They also responded that the Haitian-American community had made significant success in education and sports in the United States, but not in the political arena where a handful of U.S.-elected officials of Haitian descent voted, ran, and won political seats. These statements fit the analysis of Lafleur (2013), Pierre- Louis (2013), Romero (2018), Wah (2013), and Wiltz (2015) who advanced the idea that, despite their growing number, the Haitian-American community was yet to be seen as political minority in the United States. The participants' responses explained that Haitian Americans were not emerging as voters, let alone as candidates.

The non-emergence of Haitian Americans as voters and candidates was due primarily to an unorganized, uncollaborated, and unstructured Haitian-American leadership as well as to unwelcoming US immigration policies (Wiltz, 2015).

Electoral Success

Participants in the study clearly specified that Haitian immigrants were not making notable electoral success in local politics. The participants stated there was not too many US elected officials with the Haitian background in the Florida state legislature. The lack of electoral success was highlighted during the writing of this chapter as, out of 333.000 Haitian immigrants in Florida, of whom 224.000 were naturalized citizens, there had been only one Haitian American elected to the 147 member Florida House of Representatives (Romero, 2018 ; Wiltz, 2015). Moreover, according to the authors with an approximation of 75.000 Haitian immigrants in North Miami, there had been a handful U.S. officials of Haitian descent elected as Mayor, Councilman, or Judge in North Miami.

These facts fit the analysis of Telus (2011) and White (2013) who advanced the view that immigrant electoral success depended on how a specific immigrant group voted for a specific immigrant-candidate or candidates with whom they shared the same ethnic background. These facts also fit the analysis of Morales (2011) who stated that with electoral success, immigrants gained political seats in government. Such gains political gains could generate a substantive representation. Substantive representation entails that elected legislators advocate on behalf of certain group or the group that elects them (Bhojwani, 2014; Browning et al., 2003).

Participant to the study expressed that the Haitian-American community was doing poorly in politics because of the lack of Haitian Americans with the political ambitions to run for office. Participants further noted low interest levels of Haitian immigrants in U.S. politics as a factor for the non-emergence of Haitian-American candidates and unsuccessful results at the polls.

Progressive Political Ambition

Participants in the study openly indicated that the Haitian-American community lacked the necessary progressive political ambition to transform Haitian immigrants into a mature political base with an active constituency and an energized electorate. The lack of political ambition of Haitian immigrants in Florida was stressed during the writing of this chapter, as Haitian immigrants were not mobilized politically to be involved in their community political life, which resulted in the Haitian-American community having an insignificant political value to U.S. lawmakers.

These facts fit the analysis of Marschall and Mikulska (2013), Rigueur (2012), Wah, (2013), Wiltz (2015) who expressed that progressive political ambitions motivated minority or immigrant groups to seek political advancements in their respective community. These facts also fit the analysis of Bhojwani (2015) and Ramakrishnan (2013) who conveyed that progressive political ambition drove immigrants to become active in politics. De Graauw (2014) contented that progressive political ambitions led to candidate emergence, electoral success and, perhaps, a substantive representation in politics and government.

Haitian immigrants demonstrated low political ambitions due primarily to their immigration status, their lack of civic education, poor leadership, and a lack of collaboration among Haitian leaders. The low progressive political ambitions of Haitian immigrants contributed to Haitian immigrants not having a strong voice, presence, and weight in their community.

Substantive Representation

Participants in the study expressed that it was difficult for the Haitian-American community to achieve substantive representation in local politics. The participants further stated that without a substantive representation or without more representatives of Haitian descent in politics and without more Haitian Americans heading to the polls, the immigration Haitian-American community were facing were not debated in legislative sessions or town and council meetings. That was because Haitian Americans lacked progressive political ambitions and suffered from candidate emergence.

The lack of substantive representation was emphasized during the writing of this chapter as the Haitian American was only represented by one State Representative and a Mayor in North Miami. These facts fit the analysis of Dovi (2014), Marschall and Mikulska (2013) and Wallace (2014) who stated that a political substantive representation was responsive to the needs and interests of the constituents, especially the group with which the representatives identify themselves.

Applying Peer Reviewed Research to the Findings

Immigration

Participants to the study clearly expressed that the main barrier to the incorporation of the Haitian-American community into local politics was immigration. The current immigration policies were not favorable to the integration and assimilation of Haitian immigrants. The participants further indicated that unwelcoming immigration policies isolated Haitian immigrants while the same immigration policies were providing better opportunities for other diaspora groups such as Cubans, South Asians, and Jewish. These facts were consistent with existing literature on the plight of immigrants in the United States, which dubbed immigration as the premier impediment to immigrant incorporation into politics (de Graauw, 2014 ; Hoschschild et al, 2013). These facts also fit the analysis of Morales (2011) who determined that disparities in immigration policies enhanced the incorporation of certain groups of immigrants while they delayed that of other groups. Menchaca (2012) expressed the view that immigration entitlements were not the same for all immigrants groups. Bedolla (2015) agreed that US immigration policies were more welcoming to Cuban immigrants than they were to Haitian immigrants.

Participants to the study, moreover, noted that because of their immigration status, Haitian immigrants lived in the fear of being caught and deported and thus, they left their home only to go to work. "They do not attend protests because they know they can be arrested if they were to be asked to show their documents," a participant indicated. The participants' responses fit the analysis of Pierre (2014), Rigueur (2012),

Telus (2011), Wah (2013), and Wiltz (2015) who stated that undocumented Haitians were reluctant to show up in protests because of fear of being arrested to be deported.

Language

Participants to the study clearly indicated that the lack of fluency in the English language also prevented Haitian immigrants from becoming actively involved in politics because Haitian immigrants had difficulties understanding the U.S. political process. These responses were aligned with the findings of Bevelander and Spang (2014) who noted that immigrants, regardless of their immigration status, who were not fluent in the language of their host country, took longer to incorporate politically because they could understand their host country's political system. The knowledge of the host country's language facilitates civic integration and literacy training (Goodman & Wright, 2015 ; Ramakrishnan, 2013). According to Wah (2013), the lack of English language keeps Haitian immigrants away from politics.

The participants further noted that the first-generation of Haitian immigrants had lower levels of English proficiency than those of the second generation. The participants further expressed that Haitian immigrants of the second generation were more likely to incorporate into local politics than Haitian immigrants of the first generation because the former grew up speaking English and learning U.S. politics in schools. The findings fit the views of Ramakrishnan and Espenshade (2001**) and** Shertzer **(2013) who** indicated a low ballot turnout of first generation of immigrants compared to that of the second generation of immigrants because of the former's low English fluency.

Civic Education

Participants to the study expressed that the low turnout of Haitian community in local ballots was due to their lack of civic education. The participants indicated that Haitian immigrants knew little or had no knowledge of U.S. politics. The lack of civic education restricted the ability of Haitian immigrants to support immigrant-candidate or elected officials who may be responsive to their needs and interests.

These facts fit the findings of Marschall and Mikulska (2013), Stepick, Stepick, & Kretsedemas (2001), Wah (2013), and Wiltz (2015) who advanced that the level of incorporation of minority groups into politics and governments was related to their level of civic education. These facts also fit the analysis of Bhojwani (2015), Hoschschild et al. (2013), Ramakrishnan (2013) who indicated that civic engagement allowed immigrants to forge their identities and provided them the base to shape their political voices to make a political impact in their community. According to de Graauw (2014), Terrazas (2011) and Wallace (2014), civic education prepares immigrants for engagement, activism, and participation in local politics).

Leadership

Participants to the study indicated that the Haitian-American community lacked leaders, advocates, and elected officials to teach Haitian immigrants the skills needed to understand their rights and obligations as well as to understand immigration benefits to which they were not entitled. As immigration becomes, under the Trump administration, a hotly contested political subject, immigrant civic education has become increasingly

important as the participants expressed that the Haitian leadership was not involved in teaching literacy skills to Haitian immigrants.

Collaboration and Communication

Participants to the study expressed that the Haitian-American community operated as an unnoticeable force due to poor community engagement and political activism. The participants further expressed that if the Haitian-American community, as a whole, were mobilized to participate in politics, the community would have had a mature political value to U.S. lawmakers. These facts are constant with the findings of Amna and Ekman (2012) who contended a cohesive platform allowed immigrants or groups of immigrants to build a political presence and to demonstrate a political weight in local politics. According to Alba and Foner (2013), a political presence and a political weight are generated through the active participation of immigrants in electoral and non-electoral activities.

Underrepresentation

Participants to the study clearly mentioned that Haitian immigrants were underrepresented in politics at all levels of the US governments in comparison to the other immigrant groups. That was because of an unstructured leadership, an unorganized community, and a lack of civic education to mobilize and educate Haitian immigrants at the community level. Participants' responses were aligned with the views of Wah (2013) and Wiltz (2015) who advanced that the Haitian-American community was not active politically in their community to vote, to run for office, and to vote for candidates who favored a path to residence or citizenship for Haitian immigrants.

Limitations

The boundaries for my study were not intended to resolve or address particular policy issues that Haitian American deemed to prevent them from having a voice in local politics. Consistent with the scope for qualitative analysis, a phenomenology design was selected to purposefully select ten individuals to whom to administer an in depth interview composed of open-ended questions. The first limitation to my study was sample size. It was paramount for me to recruit Haitian-Americans who were sufficiently knowledgeable of the phenomenon to provide meaningful responses that would help me achieve saturation (Creswell, 2013). The second limitation was participant access and participant stratification.

The criterion for recruiting and selecting participants to address the research questions and the subquestions and whose meaningful responses was that the participant be a Haitian American living in Miami, Florida for at least three years. To ensure balanced participation from different sectors, I recruited from all the segments of the Haitian-American community. Another criterion was that the participant be either a community member, an organizational leader or a professional and that they had knowledge or had experienced of the phenomenon of the incorporation of Haitian immigrants into local politics and governments.

Considering that the study was intended to capture the political behaviors of Haitian Americans as they related to political mobilization, I focused the interviews on interactions between the Haitian-American leadership and the community members to explore their perceptions based on their vantage points of the phenomenon. To ensure

they were knowledgeable of the phenomenon, I browsed their profile on social network websites, especially that of the 11th department, to determine how their activities were related to community engagement and political activism. In addition, the interviews focused on experiences and activities launched by the Haitian leadership to mobilize Haitian immigrants at the local, national, and federal levels of Florida politics.

In addition, it should be noted that my knowledge and experience of the phenomenon did not influence my interpretations of the findings because I employed the concept of member checking through which the participants verified and validated my interpretation of what they reported at the times of the interviews. Member checking allowed me to avoid that my experience and knowledge influenced participants' responses, and potentially placing the trustworthiness, credibility, and reliability of the results into question (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016).

I faced substantial challenges recruiting participants to be interviewed for the study. Many Haitian Americans I contacted refused to participate because they thought they would have to provide their citizenship status or other pertinent personal information. I ensured them that names and citizenship statuses would not be in the study, and information collected would be kept in strictest privacy. Fortunately, I was ultimately able to recruit a sufficient number of individuals from each sector to interview for my data collection.

Recommendations

I recommend that the Haitian-American leadership, especially community organizers promote naturalization. In the view of Hainmueller, Hangartner, & Pietrantuono (2015)

naturalization allows immigrants to attain considerably higher levels of political efficacy and political knowledge. The findings of this study and further recommendations for building a mature and attractive Haitian-American community support the idea that Haitian immigrants must develop a bottom-up approach to build leaders at the community levels. Community leaders will launch community activities to improve civic literacy, voter registration, voter turnout, and ultimately candidate emergence to achieve electoral success and substantive representation.

Community leaders are close to the people and, in various instances, face the same obstacles as the general population. The findings further support that community leadership is more likely to address citizen concerns in comparison to the Haitian-American regional leadership where the leaders are currently unorganized, out of touch, and are fighting for power and popularity.

To improve the likelihood of civic literacy and civic engagement, this study recommends the utilization of existing channels to make alliances with other immigrant groups to learn how they succeeded in becoming an attractive political force. These recommendations fit the analysis of Trivino Salazar (2017) who advanced that alliances and coalitions with other immigrant groups were the most effective strategies to bolster the voice of immigrant groups for coalitions and alliances allow diverse immigrants groups to speak with one voice.

Moreover, using these findings, Haitian leaders, at both community and regional levels, may develop strategies to communicate civic engagement information to the communities through weekly radio shows and social networks.

The results of study showed a divided and unfocused Haitian-American leadership. This study recommends a comprehensive platform to unite Haitian-American leaders around the same table to discuss issues that are important to the future of Haitian immigrants in the United States. I recommend a united Haitian-American community where Haitian-American leaders will come together to request meetings and develop relationships with local representatives and to identify representatives who are involved in United States Senate and House Committees on Foreign Relations and show or show support to them.

I further recommend literacy classes to teach Haitian immigrants the power of their vote, to motivate Haitian immigrants to be involved in community events and to energize the Haitian-American electoral base to get out to vote in bloc because it is time that Haitian immigrants, regardless of immigration status and political affiliation, make the Haitian vote matters.

Moreover, other scholars and researchers could conduct further studies to examine and evaluate the political and social implications of the Haitian-American leadership on their abilities to provide the necessary civic education to Haitian immigrants. Using available technologies, further studies might explore how social networks might be used as a tool to establish communication among immigrants groups across the United States. Further studies could explore the viewpoints and perspectives of the Haitian-American

community regarding interaction and engagement with U.S. elected officials of Haitian descent.

Implications for Positive Social Change

In South Florida alone, there are 333,000 Haitian immigrants, of whom 244.000 were born in the U.S. or are naturalized (Romero, 2018). (Romero (2018) stated that with an approximation of 75.000 Haitian immigrants, North Miami is the largest voting bloc of the State of Florida. Despite these numbers, the Haitian-American community has not made their mark in local politics. Instead of being valued as a political minority group, Haitian Americans are referred as HIV carriers and from a shit-hole country who needs to be kicked out of the United States (Romero, 2018).

After they were insulted by the president, Haitian immigrants took the streets of Florida, New Jersey and New York to demonstrate and protest as a mean of retaliation against the disparaging comments. These protests showed that the Haitian-American community was disorganized and unstructured because different Haitian-American leaders and Haitian community-based organizations scheduled their protests the same day and at the same place protest. These protests also proved that the Haitian-American community has achieved, although individually, in the education field because those protests were led by lawyers, doctors, nurses, and engineers.

However, when it comes to the political arena, the Haitian-American community suffered tremendously because there were no leaders with a plan to transform the Haitian anger into votes for the next elections. The protests also showed that the Haitian leadership was not taking advantage of social media. Haitian immigrants who did not

tune in to Haitian radio stations did not get the invitation to protest. The Haitian leadership use radio stations and word-of-mouth to transmit their message. That was the reason a meager number showed up at the protests. The Haitian-American community knew of the protests after their friends posted pictures of the events on Facebook. Taking into account these estimates and considering that in Florida, neither the Republican Party nor the Democratic holds onto a strong majority, Haitian immigrants, if mobilized properly, would be able to affect the outcomes of presidential elections.

My study presents possible implications for positive social change if Haitian-American political leaders use the findings as a motivation tool to bolster citizen drives and voter turnout in Florida where a handful votes can sway presidential elections (Menchaca, 2012). Haitian-American community leaders may use the findings to energize the Haitian electoral base toward demonstrating progressive political ambition to run for office and to mobilize the Haitian-American community to head to the polls in larger numbers. They may have good reason to join a backlash against the Trump Administration in coming elections in 2018 and 2020.

The Haitian-American community may use the findings to work toward making an electoral stride to garner a substantive representation in the Florida legislature, the mayoralty of key cities, and in the judgeships. The Haitian-American community may use the findings fight to find their footing to even the playing field they share with other immigrant groups, especially the Latinos who have strong advocates and responsive representatives with the power to influence policies that benefit their own (Bedolla, 2015). The results of my study may encourage Haitian-American leaders to come

together to explore opportunities for engaging Haitian immigrants in the U.S. political

process as well as developing creative and innovative approaches to increase civic

education in the community.

Haitian-American leaders may use these results to initiate dialogues over

abandoning their personal agendas and standing united around seeking solutions to

transform the Haitian-American community into a political mature base with the

influence, the skills, and the competencies for useful and influential input in the U.S.

legislation. The results may also provide opportunities for a formalized and unified

structure of the Haitian-American leadership to strengthen its ability to build a political

presence in the community and demonstrate some political muscle in the U.S. political

mainstream.

Moreover, these results may encourage on-going dialogues among the leaders of

the community to foster collaboration and partnerships to amplify and leverage the

collective and unified voices of Haitian-American communities across the country. A

collaboration among Haitian leaders would serve as a resourceful repository of talents,

competencies and skills to communicate issues and develop procedural approaches for a

cohesive mobilization strategy.

In regards to the establishment of an effective line of communication among

Haitian immigrants, the Haitian leadership and local representatives, with the increasing

of technology platforms such as Facebook, What's' app, and Twitter, positive social

change may result from using the social media to further dialogues and to engage on

matters and impediments to an unorganized and structured Haitian-American

community.

Summary and Conclusions

In the final analysis, ten Haitian Americans, stratified into three professionals,

three community leaders, and four community members, shared their knowledge and

perceptions on factors that hindered Haitian immigrants from getting mobilized at the

local, national, and federal levels of the US politics and government. Their responses

revealed broad interrelating themes like immigration, language, lack of civic education,

and lack of leadership with a need for increased outreach, communication, and

collaboration toward a substantive and responsive representation.

The responses were analyzed and findings were summarized in relation to

theoretical framework and to prior literature. I recommended the use of social media to

initiate and further dialogues and to engage Haitian immigrants on matters and

impediments to an unorganized and structured Haitian-American community.

My study provided implication for positive social change in the sense the results

of my study may encourage Haitian-American leaders to come together to explore

opportunities for engaging Haitian immigrants in the U.S. political process as well as

developing creative and innovative approaches to increase civic education and

communication in the community.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions for Professionals

Demographics

How long have you been living in Miami, FL?

3 to 5 years   b. 5 to 10 years   c. +10 years

How long have you been a professional?

a. 1 to 3 years b. 3 to 5 years   c. 5 to 10 years   d. +10 years

Questions

1. What are your experiences in encouraging your clients, who are Haitian-Americans, to register to vote, vote, or run for office?

2. How do you encourage your clients who are Haitian immigrants in your community to be involved in politics at local, state, and federal levels?

3. Based on your experiences, what do you believe are the best strategies to encourage more members of the Haitian-American community to become involved in US politics?

4. What issues motivate you to politically mobilize Haitian immigrants in your community?

5. What do you believe are the biggest barriers to the political mobilization of Haitian immigrants in your community?

6. Based on your experiences, what would you say are the biggest barriers to Haitian immigrants coming together to form a cohesive force within the community?

Appendix B: Interview Questions for Organizational Leaders

Demographics

How long have you been living in Miami, FL?

3 to 5 years   b. 5 to 10 years   c. +10 years

How long have you been an organizational leader?

a. 1 to 3 years b. 3 to 5 years   c. 5 to 10 years   d. +10 years

Questions

1. What are your experiences in working with candidates of Haitian descent and U.S. elected officials of Haitian descent in your community?

2. What impact do you believe coalitions with Haitian Community-Based Organizations will have on the political mobilization of Haitian immigrants?

3. What issues motivate your organization to mobilize Haitian immigrants in your community?

4. What types of activities does your organization implement to encourage Haitian migrants in your community to be involved in politics at local, state, and federal levels?

5. What do you believe are the biggest barriers to the political mobilization of Haitian immigrants in your community?

6. Based on your experiences, what would you say are the biggest barriers to Haitian immigrants coming together to form a cohesive force within the community?

Appendix C: Interview Questions for Community Members

Demographics

How long have you been living in Miami, FL?

3 to 5 years   b. 5 to 10 years   c. +10 years

How long have you been a community member?

a. 1 to 3 years b. 3 to 5 years   c. 5 to 10 years   d. +10 years

Questions

1. Based on your experiences, what do Haitian-American leaders do to encourage you to register to vote and to vote?

2. Based on your experiences, what do Haitian-American leaders do to encourage you to know who candidates of Haitian background and your representatives are?

3. Based on your experiences, what would you say are actions of U.S. elected officials of Haitian descent to influence changes in immigration and U.S. foreign aid to Haiti policies?

4. Based on your experiences, what do you see as barriers that prevent from effectively representing you and all Haitian immigrants in Florida?

5. Based on your experiences, what do you see as barriers that prevent elected officials with the Haitian background prevent from effectively representing you and all Haitian immigrants in Florida?

6. Based on your experiences, what would you say are the biggest barriers to Haitian immigrants coming together to form a cohesive force within the community?