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CARMEN GLORIA JARPA
PAMELA CASTILLO
KAREN TORO

Aculturación en las ciencias sociales: la división del trabajo de las disciplinas sociales en la política pública

LUIS SARMIENTO

Contesting stigma: afro-descendant migrants in Santiago, Chile / Impugnando el estigma: migrantes afro-descendientes en Santiago de Chile.

MELISSA M. VALLE

Trabajo social chileno y dictadura militar.

Memoria profesional y prácticas de olvido
PATRICIA CASTAÑEDA MENESES
ANA MARÍA SALAMÉ COULON

Ética para la intervención social.

Los valores aportados por el Trabajo Social y las éticas del cuidado y no paternalista como modelos de referencia para la práctica profesional
CARLA CUBILLOS VEGA

DICIEMBRE
87 | 20
14

Afro-Descendant Migrants in Santiago, Chile: Stigma Processes and Rhetorical Resistance

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Summary

This exploratory study seeks to demonstrate the mechanisms which lead to reduced life chances for marginalized groups, as well as to understand how they negotiate stigma perspectives that suggest their identities have been devalued. It provides a qualitative empirical account of the experiences of Afro-descendants presently living in Santiago, Chile, and contributes to the debate on the realities of migrants in Latin America from the perspective of an understudied, often marginalized and excluded population. Forty-eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with adult migrants of visibly of African-descent (27 female, 22 male) from 4 continents and 15 countries, between April and May 2013. The interviews lasted an average of 25 minutes each and were conducted in Spanish or English. While this study can only provide a snapshot into the lives of some Afro-descendant migrants living in Chile, preliminary findings suggest that this population is experiencing racism and xenophobia, with which they must regularly contend, and that the strategies they employ to cope with their exclusion from society have the effect of both reinterpreting their own realities and contesting the negative stereotypes used to disparage them.

Key words. *migrants, Afro-descendants, stigma, racism, rhetorical resistance*

Introduction

Historically, Chile has developed as both a socially and culturally insular country. The presence of people of African descent in Chile, particularly in the capital city, Santiago, has always remained relatively low compared with the rest of Latin America outside of the Southern Cone. In Chile, the number of Afro-descendants has been proportionally quite small, in spite of having a long history in the northern regions of the country. It has been rendered as socially and politically invisible (Jegroo, 2013). Chile's current economic stability and prosperity are leading to an increase in the Afro-descendant population, as many venture to Chile in search of better opportunities. In 1998 Chile reformed its policy related to refugees, and began receiving asylum seekers and refugees from places with large Afro-descendant populations, i.e. Colombia, Cuba, Haiti, Somalia, and Rwanda. Following the catastrophic hurricane that struck Haiti in 2010, Chile received a surge of Haitian immigrants (Doña-Reveco & Levinson, 2012). As Chile becomes more diverse, it is becoming increasingly important that its growing cultural and racial plurality be examined. In many respects (i.e. phenotypically, culturally and often economically) those of African descent are considered "other." What have been the experiences of these migrants in a city

where many native residents had never even seen a person of African descent face-to-face?

During the 1960s, migration to Chile came largely from Europe. Economic, political and environmental changes have caused migration patterns to shift, and migrants now come primarily from Latin America (Martinez, 2003). In 1998, the government of Eduardo Frei developed a regularization program to permit irregular immigrants to obtain a one-year temporary visa, but few immigrants took advantage of the program because of the cost and time involved in the process. Without any path toward permanent residency, most immigrants fell out of legal status at the end of this period (Doña-Reveco & Levinson, 2004). The regularization initiatives of 1998 and 2007 were not contained under an explicit policy which would guarantee the rights of all of those living in the country (Stefoni, 2011).

According to the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2013), Chile became the country with the highest growth in the number of migrants between 1990 and 2013 in South America. Currently, fifty-three percent of migrants (149,335) in Chile come from Peru, while twenty-four percent come from Argentina (66,701) (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2013). In spite of the

major influx of migrants to Chile, Chilean immigration policy is still largely predicated on a legal framework created in 1975, making it one of the most antiquated migration policies in the region. The Chilean government created the Council on Migration Policy in 2014 in order to coordinate efforts and plans which reflect the current migratory patterns, and to stave off constant criticism from human rights advocates (Department of Foreigners and Migration, 2014).

Historically, race has been a key element in the construction of a national identity which frames Chile primarily as a White European society (Mora, 2008). Mora and Undurraga (2013) have demonstrated how Peruvian migrants have been racialized and subsequently have had to face labor market segregation, which limits earning prospects. Peruvian migrants have been characterized as phenotypically different from the Chilean population, as being primarily of indigenous ancestry and therefore shorter and darker, amongst other characteristics, than the Chileans. These perceived physical differences have been not only associated with cultural and historical differences, but also used to structure Peruvian migrants' access to resources and opportunities. The authors suggest that the racialization process which produces "a multidimensional system of social stratification hierarchies (class, gender and race)" is a "key dimension in the understanding of migratory experiences" (p. 294-5). The Peruvian population in Chile has been positioned on the lower end of racialized hierarchy, which determines their life chances and trajectories.

Through the experiences of a segment of the Afro-descendant population, this exploratory qualitative study considers the life chances of another migrant population and their potential position within Chile's racialized hierarchy. The initial goal was to contribute to the debate on the migratory realities of an understudied, often marginalized and excluded population to Latin America through an understanding of their motivations for migrating, livelihood, living conditions, cultural integration/assimilation, and discrimination. However, through the research process this understanding generated the following central questions:

- How does the process of stigmatization operate in the lives of Afro-descendant migrants in Santiago, Chile?
- What are the potential consequences of the stigmatization of Afro-descendant migrants in Santiago, Chile?

- What are the forms of resistance employed by Afro-descendant migrants to attenuate stigma-related processes?

Interviews suggest that in Santiago Afro-descendant migrants' perceived distinct racial and citizenship statuses serve as two primary bases for stigmatization processes. Interviews also reveal how Afro-descendant migrants have sought to make sense of the labels that have become salient in their lives in their new country and how they use rhetoric to both justify and disavow perspectives that suggest their identities have been devalued. Broadly, this project seeks to understand how racial and citizenship hierarchies, discrimination and the resulting social stigma can impact the life chances of the stigmatized and the process by which marginalized groups contest stigma. The ways other factors related to gender, class, nationality, language, and skin color mediate in race-related stigma are discussed as areas of future research.

Methodology

The primary sources of data for this project were semi-structured interviews and photographs, supplemented by existing public statistical data and historical information about immigration to Chile. I resided in Santiago, Chile and conducted interviews between April and May 2013 while serving as a visiting scholar in the sociology department of Universidad Alberto Hurtado in Santiago. Forty-eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with adult immigrants residing in Santiago, Chile (26 female, 22 male). Participants were of visibly African-descent, from 4 continents and 15 countries. Interviews were confidential and voluntary, and informed consent was requested of all participants prior to them. Interviews lasted an average of 25 minutes and were conducted in either Spanish or English. All but 11 were audio-recorded for record keeping and accuracy of verbatim transcription. Thirty-nine migrants (approximately 80% of those interviewed) were also photographed.

A non-random selection strategy that combined *sampling for range* and *convenience sampling* (Weiss, 1994) was used. The overall recruitment aim for the study was to gather a range of experiences and diversity on various dimensions including: age, gender, countries of origin, social and economic classes in participants' countries of origin, living conditions and opportunities at the time of interview, and physical appearances with regard to phenotype. The gross majority of those appearing to be visibly of

African-descent in Santiago, Chile are not originally from the country. It was therefore fairly safe to assume that when someone appeared to be of African descent that they had migrated from elsewhere, likely within the last fifteen years. I approached African-descendants wherever I encountered them (e.g. on the street and subway, restaurants and stores, parks, etc.) and asked them where they came from and whether they were willing to participate in the study. In addition, I utilized contacts in Santiago and interviewees for a referral sampling (Babbie, 1992) prior to leaving that city.

this work.

As exploratory research, this project was not intended for theory building, but to provide a framework for further research. However, emergent qualitative and constructivist grounded theory approaches (Charmaz, 2005), rooted in the reflexive sociological tradition (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), were utilized to develop the project. I employed the grounded theory heuristics of field note taking, coding along various dimensions, memo writing, constant comparing, and sorting and diagramming memos throughout the project (Tavory and Timmermans, 2009). A posteriori knowledge generated from evidence on the experiences of the target population was used to consider possible theoretical accounts for the observed data. In vivo codes consisting of participants' direct statements were of particular importance. Through repeated inscriptions of observations and the recalibration of my own hypotheses and pre-existing theories, I arrived at the most plausible interpretation of the observed data (Charmaz, 2005). Open coding led to axial coding focused on the core phenomena of stigma-related processes¹.

Participants were asked about the reasons they moved to Chile, the conditions of life there (e.g. their jobs and where and with whom they lived, networks of friends, etc.), and if they had suffered discrimination. I had a particular curiosity about the extent of racism and discrimination experienced by Afro-descendants in Chile, a country in which nationals absolve society by stating it is one without these systemic forms of bias and arguing that racism is primarily a United States phenomenon. For this reason I have made it a point to include a number of quotes to give voice to those who are being silenced by the myth that racism does not exist in Chile.

While the evidence is anecdotal, it is still critical for an understanding of the experiences of those confronting discrimination.

The emergent nature of constructivist grounded theory allows for an understanding of the ways the researchers' perspectives will evolve as a result of interactions in the field (Charmaz, 2008). My first eight interviews were with people from Latin America and the Caribbean, and almost none of them openly talked about racism or xenophobia. I surmised that incidents were transpiring that I was not targeting my questions adequately. These suspicions were confirmed when I interviewed a man from Haiti, Yves², a former accountant now working at a restaurant in Santiago. While talking to him, his Chilean supervisor, approximately 55 years of age, came out of the restaurant and spoke of how good of a guy Yves was. The other male workers from the restaurant and the tourist office across the street were all extremely interested in why I was speaking with the Haitian man. Yves had been emphatic in telling me that he had never experienced discrimination in Chile. "NEVER!" he proclaimed when questioned. He had this air of wanting to seem as if he had everything under control, which reminded me that I had to be cautious of how my physical appearance and gender could alter how men in particular answer these questions to seem more in control and dominant.

When I started to photograph Yves the other men really became animated. And while he had claimed to experience no racism, the comments his peers made as I photographed him suggested otherwise. They were typical of the embodied and cultural racism often projected at Black men (Weaver, 2011). The exchange was imbued with racism, homophobia and machismo. There was a Brazilian man present who was the main offender. He was clearly also an Afro-descendant but not as visibly as Yves. "Oh I thought you were a reporter from the National Geographic taking pictures of exotic animals," the Brazilian man said and repeated it a number of times to punctuate it. Many of the jokes were sexual in nature, such as about Yves' penis and his sexuality. The Brazilian man said Yves walked around with a rainbow flag, insinuating he was homosexual. Yves was clearly embarrassed by the comments, but appeared to feign as if it were all in jest and said something to the effect of "oh these guys" as he

1 Use of an extant concept is a deviation from traditional grounded theory methods. During the selective coding process it became evident that a pattern was emerging which coincided with existing literature on the subject.

2 Pseudonym

laughed uncomfortably. I asked myself, “Why was Yves choosing to frame things in such a manner? What purpose did framing this incident as such serve for him?”

This interaction in the field confirmed my suspicions that people were in fact having racially charged experiences that I was not capturing with my interview protocol. I understood that in order to truly uncover racism and discrimination, I would have to rephrase my interview questions to identify specific behaviors. Initially I was simply asking, “Have you experienced racism, discrimination, etc.?” But in thinking about this encounter and others similar to it that I would witness, this iterative process that involved going back and forth between the data and analysis led me to eventually incorporate the following three questions that would change the nature of the majority of the interviews that followed:

- How would you define your race, ethnicity, etc.?
- Have you heard others like you talk about experiences of discrimination/prejudice? Provide a specific example.
- Have people made comments or jokes about your skin color, hair, nationality, etc.? Provide a specific example.

My motivation behind the first question was my curiosity about whether there was a relationship between how participants identify themselves in terms of race and the sense of discrimination. In asking the second question I sought to incorporate the shared experiences of others as well as accounts that are actually personal, but may be recounted as being those of others due to ambivalence about speaking from a personal perspective. The third question was critical because race-based humor has long been understood as a potentially scurrilous conflict device even when the malice is concealed (Burma, 1946) and as a rhetorical device can be used to reinforce racism (Weaver, 2011).

Stigma Defined

While a great deal of the extensive multidisciplinary research on the concept of stigma begins with the 1963 seminal work of sociologist Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, much of it has come from the field of psychology. The selected works here focus on stigma from a sociological point of view, albeit incorporating psychological texts, in order to explain the social processes that allow the hegemonic views of one group to produce real life, social consequences for others. Goffman (1963) defined a stigma as an attri-

bute that can make someone “different from others in the category of persons available for him to be, and of a less desirable kind” and “thus reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (p. 3). One of the specific types of stigmas he discusses is “the tribal stigma of race, nation, and relation, these being stigma that can be transmitted through lineages and equally contaminate all members of a family” (Goffman, 1963, p.4). While there has been a history of members of some racialized groups attempting to mask their inclusion in such groups (for examples see Daniel, 1992; Kennedy, 2001; Rappaport, 2009; “Hidden Children: Hardships”, 2013), this study focuses on those of African-descent who do not have an inability to “pass as normal” or who selectively disclose the discredited attributes of color and race.

Historically, those studying stigma-related processes based on Goffman’s definition favored a deficit approach, emphasizing what appeared to be the failings of the stigmatized individuals. The widely held deficit view of stigma has been recognized as problematic exactly because it implies some failing on the part of the person whom is considered different (Shelton, Alegre & Son, 2010). A number of authors (Fine & Asch, 1988; Kleinman, et al., 1995; Sayce 1998; Schneidre, 1988) have argued against utilizing the stigma paradigm, suggesting its limitations in assigning responsibility to the collective and individual perpetrators of discrimination and prefer using only the concept of discrimination. As I am particularly interested in the social processes which devalue certain categories of human beings, I prefer to utilize the definitions of stigma of other scholars who do in fact emphasize discrimination, so as to make certain that acts of unfair treatment are rendered visible. I also believe that what gives stigma its analytic purchase is the fact that it incorporates the mechanisms that lead to such discrimination.

Crocker (1999) suggests, “A person who is stigmatized is a person whose social identity, or membership in some social category, calls into question his or her full humanity—the person is devalued, spoiled, or flawed in the eyes of others” (89). Link and Phelan (2001) define stigma as the co-occurrence of its components: labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination, which is dependent on power. Working from these definitions, I view stigma as a social construct- a reflection of culture, not a poverty of individuals (Ainlay, Gaylene Becker, & Coleman, 1986), a label that is affixed, which does not lie within the person, but is about relations.

Gussow and Tracy (1968) argue that Goffman’s origi-

nal theory does not allow for any serious attempt by stigmatized individuals to destigmatize themselves. They suggest Goffman assumes that the stigmatized persons agree with the way they are viewed by society and, therefore, do little to actively disavow such beliefs. In looking at everyday resistance practices of stigmatized groups, this study follows the recent shift of stigma research “from a near exclusive focus on stigmatized individuals from a deficit perspective to one that emphasizes the resilient nature of stigmatized individuals,” as well as a shift from understanding the experiences of the stigmatized through the non-stigmatized to “the inclusion of the phenomenological perspective of stigmatized individuals” (Shelton et al., 2010, p. 619).

Reissman (2000) has uncovered the everyday resistance practices used by married South Indian women who have been stigmatized for being childless; the attributes related to social class and age which mediate the stigmatization process; and the different strategies that can be called upon given these other attributes. I likewise consider rhetorical strategies employed to repudiate stigma and consider areas for future research related to the attributes that mediate stigma in the case of racial and ethnic migrant minorities. Lamont, Wellburn and Fleming (2013) have shown the cultural repertoires or “social scripts, myths, and cultural structures” (p. 130) that stigmatized groups use to empower themselves through positive self-concept, dignity, and a sense of inclusion, belonging and recognition. While I do not look specifically at the repertoires derived from national ideologies and neoliberalism, I do consider how narratives of Afro-descendant migrants’ collective identities are used as strategies to respond to stigmatization as a macro-focused act of destigmatization.

My interviews complement the existing work on stigma by incorporating the perspectives of an understudied population, Afro-descendant migrants in Chile, and illuminate patterns to demonstrate “why stigmatized groups experience so many disadvantages” (Link & Phelan 2001, 372). This empirical project, by incorporating the alternative conceptualization of stigma of Link and Phelan (2001), provides a better understanding of the nature and consequences of stigma and the distribution of life opportunities.

Findings

By the time I arrived in Chile I had already spent over a decade traveling to Latin American countries in the Caribbean, Central and South America; to

places where I had been immersed in environments with far more people who looked like me than in the United States. But I had never traveled to the Southern Cone of South America. And, while I understood that as a result of various processes (e.g. immigration, massacre, displacement, economy, etc.) the countries in the Southern Cone were comparatively considered more phenotypically White European than most other countries in Latin America, I still did not expect to be looked at with such awe and confusion when I arrived in Chile. Yet the intense gazes of my fellow passengers, shoppers, pedestrians and others became a regular part of my daily experience there.

One of the main challenges to the stigma concept is that many of the social scientists that study stigma do not belong to stigmatized groups and therefore theorize stigma using perspectives and theories uninformed by the lived experience of the people they study (Kleinman, et al 1995). I, however, write from the perspective of someone who shares some of the stigma of those I study. A number of study participants used me as reference when describing themselves or family members, such as a Peruvian woman who when describing her race, said, “My race is black. But no, I have a Black mother and a White father, so I am *morena* (tawny-brown) like you” (Female, 41, Peru). Within the context of Santiago, Chile the racialization of Afro-descendants results in a commonality of experience that informs this work.

Through the interview process a number of concepts and themes began to emerge, and all have the potential for future research. Interviews highlighted the various ways in which the majority Chilean population has affixed Afro-descendant migrants with a social stigma due to their minority racial and citizenship statuses. They also revealed how the Afro-descendant migrants have, in turn, sought to make sense of the labels that have become salient in their lives in their new country and how they both justify and disavow perspectives that suggest their identities have been devalued. The co-occurrence of the components of the stigmatization process defined by Link and Phelan (2001) were revealed through formal interviews, personal experience and casual conversation:

- Labeling differences;
- Linking differences with stereotypes;
- Separating “us” from “them” and;
- Status loss and discrimination.

Labeling Differences

While many have noted that Latin America utilizes a system of racialization that incorporates far more categories than the relatively dichotomous racial framework employed in the United States, there is still a very clear racial order, which is not arbitrary and is predicated on a system of white supremacy (Andrews, 2004; Skidmore, 1993; Wade, 1993). Racial structures still mediate social life, as was mentioned in the case of Peruvian migrants in Chile. The labeling process in this case of stigma is primarily related to the racialization of groups. Racial identification marks social status and can therefore be an important factor in the maintenance of group differentiation (Bashi & McDaniel, 1997). Racial identities are affixed labels that have a particular salience in Latin America, especially when one considers how highly correlated racialized categories are with class categories.

In societies where racial stratification exists, immigrants are often forced to assimilate as members of defined racialized groups (Bashi & McDaniel, 1997). While some participants shared that they had experienced racism in their native countries, for others this was the first time that they understood what it meant to have this label of “*negro*” affixed to them. Goffman discusses the new relationship that can emerge with a stigmatized group when people discover late in life that they are considered a member of this group. In Santiago, I saw this taking place with the population from the Dominican Republic, a country whose inhabitants have been known to reject the Afro-descendant label (Torres-Saillant, 2000). In Chile, I found many more Dominicans who identified themselves as Black than I had in other places such as the United States and the Dominican Republic, although they were still the only participants to refer to themselves as “*mulatto*” (of black and white race mixture). I discovered a shopping center that was neither linguistically nor nationally homogeneous, with businesses and clients from locations such as Haiti, East and West Africa, Colombia and the Dominican Republic, but it was based on the needs of people of African descent (clothing, hair, food, etc.) and suggested the possibilities of how racialized otherness can be potentially unifying excluded groups. Non-black Peruvians have been noted as developing a similar transnational cohesion in Chile as a result of their social marginalization and a “common repertoire of symbolic representations” (Mora, p. 344, 2008).

Due to the nature of immigration and the limited history of the enslavement of people of African-des-

cent in Chile (compared to other countries in the Americas), their stigmatized skin color also results in a stigma related to assumed citizenship status. Afro-descendants are quickly identified as being non-native to Chile and potentially arouse many of the anxieties Chilean citizens have about the influx of immigrants. This combined xenophobia and racism was evident in an interview with a Colombian man when asked about experiences with racism:

Yes, one time, a lady told me something. I didn't know that you needed a card [called BIP] to get on the bus... and the light turned red and I asked the driver to pass and he allowed me to pass. But a woman said to me “Oh, you black man, you have come from your country to beg for a ride in Chile.” (Male, 49, Colombia)

Linking Differences with Stereotypes

Difference in itself is not problematic, but it becomes so when those differences are associated with negative characteristics that can have significant social consequences. There were a number of very clear instances when the labels associated with Afro-descendancy (Black, Negro, Afro etc.) were connected with negative attributes. In an informal conversation in Santiago with a woman of visible Indigenous and Spanish ancestry from Colombia, she expressed that all of the Afro-Colombians with whom she had come in contact were lazy, loud and aggressive. In her experience she alleged that blacks were wasteful with money, choosing to purchase stereos and TVs rather than things to improve their conditions. Such stereotyping is the basis of anti-Black prejudice, whereby preconceived judgments or stereotypes are made about those categorized as Black. Such an attribution of negative characteristics to a group of people is made regardless of whether the group actually possesses the characteristics (Feagin, 1992). This Colombian woman's comments highlighted the kinds of stereotyped beliefs that those migrating from other countries were bringing to Chile, contributing to the existing stereotypes and potentially generating ones that had not existed before.

The devaluation of people of visible African-descent as having less than desirable qualities or characteristics was particularly pronounced for black women, who shared that they are often assumed to be prostitutes and hypersexual, which can be particularly challenging in a conservative society. The intersectional identity of black women as both women and as Afro-descendant shapes various dimensions of their experiences which cannot necessarily be captured by looking at each dimension separately

(Crenshaw, 1991). One Ecuadorian woman, when talking about work prospects, said:

They don't give you an opportunity because they say that black women have come here to prostitute themselves and when there is a TV series, they always use the black woman as a prostitute, and that is sad and it angers me a lot. I feel, through that, that they are discriminating against us all, because always the black women in miniseries are prostitutes and nothing else but that. (Female, 30, Ecuador)

This also reveals ways in which the media reinforces problematic stereotypes of black women in Chile. Such defamatory depictions have had a long history in Latin America (Reales Jiménez, 2011). They exploit existing symbols and create new ones, and have the effect of normalizing forms of oppression (Collins, 2000). They have the power to distort realities, discredit Black women and provide the ideological justifications for racial hierarchies.

A number of female participants discussed the fawning attention they regularly received from men: some didn't care about it, but others felt that it was related to adventure-seeking and the construction of a fantasy. The same Ecuadorian woman previously cited, when discussing the treatment black women receive from Chilean men, continued:

...It is a shame because sometimes you may like a man but because there is so much bad information about us, we are just like sexual desire. They look at you like a sexual fantasy and afterwards they find out that this is a woman with dreams, with dignity, that wants to love and that wants something stable, and that it is not only about sex. Then they give you some dignity, but at the beginning everywhere you go, whether taking a taxi, walking the street or talking to someone Chilean, it's always about sex. I have lived here 8 years and it's the same thing all of the time. You feel badly because you want to be seen as a woman and not a sexual fantasy. (Female, 30, Ecuador)

A Colombian woman similarly said, "Yes, they always say 'blacks are this' and 'black women are like this.' The men look at you as a sexual object, and the women look at you with anger, with jealousy" (Female, 36, Colombia). One Cuban woman rubbed her forearm to suggest her skin color and said "**This** and sex are the same here, for women **and** men" (Female, 38, Cuba). While I particularly framed the interview questions in relation to part-

nership and sexual advances by native Chileans to women, this association with blackness and male hyper-sexuality was evident in an informal conversation with a Chilean business owner with whom I discussed the project. Like many men, he was curious as to how the men were treating me in Santiago. We discussed this and he then went on to warn me about the black men I was studying, because Black men (*los Negros*) are "very impulsive."

Separating "Us" from "Them"

Once there is an association between labels, in this case blackness, and negative stereotypes such as those discussed above, the mental exercise involving moving someone to a very distinct symbolic space is made much simpler. And once they are moved to this "other" category, then what happens to them becomes less of a concern and "there is little harm in attributing all manner of bad characteristics to 'them'" (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 370-1). The process of othering "serves to mark and name those thought to be different from oneself" (Weis, 1995) and results in marginalization, disempowerment, and social exclusion (Grove & Zwi, 2006). The construction of the Us-Them dichotomy draws a line between worthy and unworthy life and can ultimately result in durable inequality which relies on the institutionalization of categorical pairs (Tilly, 2005).

Almost all participants spoke of being considered "other" and the intense stares they received on a regular basis, which they believed were a consequence of their "otherness." Participants had been randomly asked by unrelated members of the predominant Chilean population to be photographed, brought home to show family members, and regularly had their hair and flesh touched by strangers. A 28-year-old Haitian man said that when he first began living in Santiago five years ago, a complete stranger in the supermarket asked him for "*besos negritos*" (little black kisses) and when on the subway someone just screamed out of nowhere, almost in horror, "*Negro!*" (Male, 28, Haiti). A woman from Brazil shared the following story:

Now I remember a time where I had my hair loose like how you have it. And I went to a mall in San Carlos de Apoquindo, and there were these three girls with their very straight hair, super straight like after it is ironed, and they kept looking at me. All of them were like 17 and were smoking, and I was the weird one, do you understand? And one of the girls was taking the escalator up and she would not stop staring at my hair and well, that doesn't

matter to me because it is good that they see different things. (Female, 31, Brazil).

Note that she interprets this incident as being meaningless to her and beneficial for the girls involved, a potential rhetorical strategy to limit discomfort.

Goffman (1963), speaking as one that does not possess the stigma associated with the affixed differentness, suggested, "By definition, of course, we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human. On this assumption we exercise varieties of discrimination, through which effectively, if often unthinkingly, reduce his life chances." Feeling that those of African descent were perceived as mythical creatures and less than human was a concern of participants. A woman from Switzerland shared, "they see it [blackness] as something exotic. That bothers me sometimes a bit. Because they see you as an animal in a zoo. Instead of a person, you are like an animal in the zoo. I don't know. But it's not like someone has said something to me directly. It's what I perceive." (Female, 32, Switzerland).

Status Loss and Discrimination

"When people are labeled, set apart, and linked to undesirable characteristics, a rationale is constructed for devaluing, rejecting, and excluding them" (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 371). Many of the interviewees provided concrete examples of what people had said or done to them that they believed was motivated by the racial label that had been affixed to them. The offenses included a range of experiences, from blatantly racist physical assaults and verbal jabs to racism that was more concealed, such as subtle slights and microaggressions. Almost all those whom I had asked whether they knew someone who had experienced racism told me they had and cited examples.

Some participants discussed incidents involving physical violence, even though many noted that what they liked most about Chile was the overall safety, particularly those who came from places recently or currently in conflict such as the Congo, Haiti and Buenaventura, Colombia. A 20-year-old male from the Dominican Republic when talking about others' experiences with discrimination said, "Yes, many friends. And I have even seen it on the news, where Colombians who are Black have been killed" (Male, 20, Dominican Republic). A Colombian man spoke of a personal attack, "...yes, they robbed me once. They attacked me and they broke my shoulder with a bottle" (Male, 23, Colombia). A Haitian man initially told me: "It is a country where I realize that people are very classist. Racial discrimination?

Normally, no. But discrimination because you are a foreigner and do not speak that language" (Male, 28, Haiti). But when I asked about people he knew who had experienced discrimination he said a friend from Haiti was assaulted in an elevator by a man who hit him and told him to go back to his country. When questioned about others whom she had spoken to about their experiences with racism and discrimination, a Colombian woman said: "Yes, many people have told me that they have been discriminated against, and I have seen it publically. Here they kill people; they kill people just because they are black. Here they don't accept them" (Female, 55, Colombia). It is important to note that while I cannot verify racially-motivated murders, the respondent is under the impression that the racial group to which she has been identified as belonging to is being murdered as a result of this label, which has to bear psychological consequences. There is a large body of research that supports that perceived blatant and subtle racism produces negative psychological states and can produce in anxiety, lower self-perception, symptoms of depression and poor health (see Blascovich et al., 2001; Carter, 2007; Clark et al., 1999; Harrell et al., 2003; and Sue et al., 2007).

Participants and their associates experienced, as described by Glenn Loury (2003), both "discrimination in contract" which is discrimination in the job market and "in contact", which is informal and involves entirely legal patterns of socializing and networking that tend to exclude Blacks and thereby perpetuate racial inequality. Besides the emotional toll this form of discrimination takes, it has material consequences due to the transmission of advantage through personal contacts in racially and nationally segregated social networks.

In the first interview where someone openly spoke about racism before I had to probe, I asked whether a young Dominican woman working in a restaurant had experienced discrimination and prejudice she said:

Yes, at work. And I have a son and it's like 'Ahh! A Black person (un Negro)!' [Throws up her hands] It's like an illness. We're new here. There still aren't Afro-Chileans. There's a law to protect us but it doesn't work. I responded to an ad for a job over the phone and the woman agreed to meet me, but when I arrived she told me 'It's for Chileans only.' I went to the embassy about this because it's discrimination. (Female, 23, Dominican Republic)

The consequences of symbolic devaluation can have very concrete material dimensions. If the dominant thinking among the majority Chilean population does in fact deem this participant's racial category as something akin to an illness, something worthy of revulsion, then this perspective would have major negative consequences were she to attempt to secure a job from someone, as she did. Securing and maintaining employment is a requirement for temporary work visas in Chile, and permanent permits are only granted to those who can demonstrate continuous work with the same employer for two years, a challenge of great concern shared by a number of study participants.

With regard to discrimination in contract, some participants shared experiences in which they felt they were not given a job, were fired, were given the worst tasks at work or were penalized more because of their race and/or perceived nation of origin. A Cuban woman said:

... They expressed it once in a high school where I was teaching poor students. There was a small group of girls who would not take my class because I was Black. And it was a bad and poor high school. And there was the time I agreed to go to work helping the sick and they did not accept me because I had to be White. (Female, 65, Cuba)

A Peruvian man who had been living in Santiago for five years said that one of the things that he liked least about Chile was the working limitation for foreigners. When asked whether he had experienced discrimination he said that he had been fired from his job in aviation and his supervisor told his friend he fired him because he was Black (Male, age unknown, Peru). A woman from an African nation said:

For me, when I was working they discriminated against me and were racist. Because I'm working in a certain place and I'm a Black, anything that is bad that happens, it is the Black who did it. Ya understand? Anything that happens there you will be the first suspect. You understand? And when I was working they didn't share the job equally. They always will be giving you the worst jobs. And like them, when they don't do something, no one will ask them. But if you dare not do that that job for one day, it will be the end of you! That's when I was working hotels. That's why I stopped working in hotels, because they did so many discriminatory things. (Female, 34, nationality not revealed)

A Colombian woman who had been an educator in her native country and was living in Santiago for six years said that what she liked least about living in Chile was "the abuse, discrimination and racism" and spoke about the labor abuse against foreigners. Again, having the dual stigma of being both foreign and Black, can have a particularly discriminatory effect. She went on to say:

I haven't experienced racial discrimination but many have because of their color. There is racism here. There is discrimination. I know there's a lot against foreigners. More than anything, it is the abuse bothers me. There's racism in the entire world, discrimination in all parts. In my country, where I was born, there is discrimination and racism, but the labor abuse is what bothers me the most." (Female, 55, Colombia)

Discrimination in contract can also be applied to educational settings. A 22-year-old Colombian man shared:

Yes, when I started studying I was the only little black guy... the only afro-descendant in my classroom, and all my friends said "oh the black guy, the black guy" and many didn't want to do projects with me because I was black. (Male, 22, Colombia)

In relation to discrimination in contact, people often described what could be considered acts of microaggression. Racial microaggressions are "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults towards people of color" (Sue et al., 2007) and come in various forms:

1. Microassaults: Conscious and intentional actions or slurs, such as using racial epithets, displaying swastikas or deliberately serving a white person before a person of color in a restaurant.
2. Microinsults: Verbal and nonverbal communications that subtly convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity. An example is an employee who asks a colleague of color how she got her job, implying she may have landed it through an affirmative action or quota system.
3. Microinvalidations: Communications that subtly exclude, negate or nullify the thoughts, feelings or experiential reality of a person of color. For instance, white people often ask Asian-Americans

where they were born, conveying the message that they are perpetual foreigners in their own land (Sue et al., 2007).

Mircoaggressions have been shown to: (a) assail the mental health of recipients, (b) create a hostile and invalidating work or campus climate, (c) perpetuate stereotype threat, (d) create physical health problems, (e) saturate the broader society with cues that signal devaluation of social group identities, (f) lower work productivity and problem solving abilities, and (g) be partially responsible for creating inequities in education, employment and health care (Sue, 2010). The following is an Ecuadorian woman's example of a microassault:

Yes many times, for example, when you go to the doctor and you get there first and the number you have [reservation] has been passed over and they leave you for last because everyone else is white. And they call everyone and you arrived third and they are calling someone who arrived twentieth and they tell you to wait. I have heard that (Female, 30, Ecuador).

Discrimination in health care facilities was mentioned in another conversation with a Colombian woman who was questioned whether blacks experienced discrimination:

Yes, plenty. For example, they go to a hospital and they don't get treated. They [staff] make you wait, even if they go with a chilvery sick. There is no free time. But to a Chilean, yes there are openings. They're always in the line looking at you suspiciously, also in the buses, like that. (Female, 36, Colombia)

The woman from an African country previously cited, when asked whether she had experienced acts of discrimination, said:

Too many. Too many. Too many. We don't know our rights. How can we talk about this, about discrimination? They make you afraid of doing anything. They will tell you to wait while another person is being attended to when you got there first. You don't know what you can do. You just feel bad. You leave the place or you wait. If you don't, you won't be assisted. You have no option. You just have to wait. They are the ones who put you aside. So what do you do? Ya understand? It's so painful. But you are not in your country so there's nothing you can do to them. You just have to accept. But it's painful. (Female, 34, country withheld)

Those with Chilean partners appeared to be subject to the sort of verbal slights that can come with being with people in intimate spaces. A Cuban woman with a Chilean partner said when referring to their circle of Chilean friends and family, "...there are many comments and they see a Black person and they say 'that person slept on the beach. That person was toasted and burned him/herself'" (Female, 38, Cuba). A Brazilian woman said:

Yes. Not directly I directly, but I still feel that the country is racist, you know? I have not personally experienced racism. I feel they are more classist than racist, and I think in general people do not discriminate, but I feel racism. Because I see things; for example, my brother-in-law is Chilean and white and I thought he wouldn't like me very much and I've heard some racist comments on his part. We were watching a European soccer match and there was a black player and they started to imitate a monkey, and he found it funny. I mean, he is not racist. You understand? People here are not aware of that. Or other friends too that I know very well, have made comments in this regard, not to me, but when referring to other things, other people. Then, I realize that maybe because we live and we interact together they forget and are already accustomed to me, they don't say something against me. But I have this feeling that the country is racist. Like Nestlé, for example, has made a promotional campaign for an ice cream named "Pelátano", when the image is a drawing of a monkey, but when it is a photograph they put a black child and this happens because it is here. Because if it were in a country that has a history of Blacks they would never allow an advertisement like this. But here, since there are no blacks, they don't have a history of racism and all, and they do not realize that this is racist. It is not something directed towards me but it is very negative. (Female, 31, Brazil)

These sorts of somewhat incompatible accounts of experiences with racism were common. "I do not experience racism but this very racist thing happened." Often people chose to look at the acts as not being about them specifically or separating the acts from the person that carried out the acts. So in her example, the brother-in-law was not racist but carried out a racist act. Understanding the different ways participants were attempting to reconcile these various encounters became critical

to understand how they were able to respond to stigma processes.

Coping with Stigma and Resistance Practices

Link and Phelan (2001) state that as stigmatized individuals find themselves in continual struggle with negative attitudes, and with the devalued status that accompanies them they must constantly develop strategies for dealing with stigma. If power as domination is organized and operates via intersecting oppressions, then resistance must show comparable complexity (Collins, 2000). When talking about their discrimination, some participants saw the road to the conditional acceptance of Blacks as being predicated upon a certain kind of assimilation into mainstream Chilean culture. This takes the onus of change off from the person committing the acts of discrimination and places it squarely onto those being discriminated against. One Cuban woman shared:

Yes, they say "shitty Negro." There are many people who are not educated because they say "shitty Black man or shitty Black woman." And what are you going to do to those people? You let them be, but for the time that I have been here I have had many successes, because one has to come and adapt. One is searching for a better life and one has to take the positive and try to integrate oneself in the workforce in the best manner and to follow the laws of this country. But yes, there is discrimination, in a small scale, but it's there. Look, I understand that there is discrimination but in my case I have not experienced it much and because I have treated people with respect. But all of a sudden, one knows that they don't please someone based on how they look at you and then you assume that there is discrimination. (Female, 38, Cuba)

In stating that she has not experienced as much discrimination as others because of her behavior, she individualizes the problem and inadvertently implies that those experiencing more discrimination are at fault. This perspective can be problematic when assessing systemic causes of discrimination and yet it also, on an individual level, permits people to believe that change is within their realm of control.

In spite of what many shared, participants largely refused to make generalizations about the dominant population, a gesture that seemed rarely reciprocated. This was evident in one of the most revealing

interviews I had with a well-educated 26-year-old Haitian woman who came to Chile because of her male partner, whom she had met in the United States. She was very hesitant to say anything disparaging about Chile. When asked to describe her race, ethnicity or color, she seemed confused, which I found particularly strange because she had spent ten years studying in the United States. As I began to probe, the conversation went as follows:

Respondent: Um, I don't have any good description. I never think of it.

Interviewer: If you had to fill out a form what would you write?

Respondent: Never think about it, sorry. Never thought about it.

Interviewer: About what? Your race, color, and ethnicity? No? Okay.

Respondent: No, doesn't matter. Hahaha.

Interviewer: But you mentioned earlier you feel discriminated against, so?

Respondent: Sometimes, yeh.

And then I proceeded to ask her about her experiences with discrimination. She revealed the following:

Yes, I remember I was in one of [inaudible]. There was a lady who saw me with my boyfriend. My boyfriend's White, blond, green eyes. [Laughs aloud] and I'm completely the opposite so he said that she told him that we were trying to improve the race. The Chilean race or something like that and now she says that they are mixing with Black people. So for me it was like, hahaha. Well, okay. Yeh. [Laughs aloud uncomfortably]. I was like, actually I cried. I cried. Yeh, this was the first time I listened to something like that. In The States it isn't something really normal and in my country too so when I came here to listen that it was [Me: You were feeling...?] Disappointed. [Me: This was when you first got here?]. Yes about one year or something.

And tears began to well up in her eyes as she smiled somewhat stoically. When I later asked her about whether people had made comments to her about her skin color, hair, etc. she hesitantly revealed the following:

Not so far, no not really. But yes, I have some experiences. Okay. It's that here in Chile there are some Skinheads and I have found them around the city. And they yell "you can't come

here because if you come anymore, if you come for a second time, I'm going to do something bad to you." Maybe it was just bad luck or one of these days. Ya know? I'm not complaining about it because you're gonna find maybe 10% of the people that are like that and the 90% are completely the opposite. (Female, 26, Haiti)

In her responses to these questions, she seemed to be working through the processes of stigmatization. She was ambivalent about self-identifying as part of a group that she later demonstrated that she knew was discriminated against. She made it clear that she did not want to be thought of as different from anyone else, as "other." She had directly faced various forms of racist and xenophobic discrimination. Yet her response was to attempt to proceed as if nothing had happened or consider them as isolated incidents.

Participants often discussed treatment in the manner in which this Haitian woman did, giving percentages of Chileans they felt were racist, reminding me that there are good and bad people everywhere. A number of the participants told me about the specific people they had known who were good to them or helped them when they were in need. For example, a woman from Nigeria shared:

Here I have met people who are very good, like when my husband came he knew nobody. It was some Chilean family that accepted him without knowing him. Some are like that. While some are very bad. They don't want to see you. They don't want to do anything with you. They don't want to relate with you. But some are good. That is how this country is. But those that are good are not up to those that are bad. You get it? Those who are good they are just about maybe 30%, while the bad ones are 70%. (Female, 33, Nigeria).

This use of percentages when discussing people who discriminate can also be found in some of the interviews of Black men in Michèle Lamont's *Dignity of Working Men* (2002). This particular pattern has yet to be theorized, so further empirical data to develop an emergent interpretation is necessary (Charmaz, 2008).

A number of participants seemed as if they could tolerate the social discrimination, the "discrimination in contact", but the kind that they felt directly affected their economic condition, "discrimination in contract", seemed unacceptable. This is logical given the fact that most of those interviewed seemed to have migrated to Chile because of the potential

financial opportunities. A 42-year-old man from the Democratic Republic of the Congo shared:

Chile is a good country. A country that is good to live in. The most difficult and complicated part is the economic part... I am Black but I have two university degrees, both of five years each. One can't work, as one ought to. I have to have the documents. The truth is that someone who has five years of college and comes from a catholic school has to go back and do it all again. I see it as if I were a child going back to school again, to be honest, and the government has to analyze that as well, that people do not discriminate against someone. Because an African can't work in a company. A Black man can't be a financial director or a director of the company. That part the government has to consider, because it is important. (Male, 42, Democratic Republic of the Congo)

While pain was a common theme for a number of participants, some did not share animosity about abuse, but instead responded to racism by ignoring or justifying it, saying it was all in good fun when friends made disparaging comments. Many attributed the ill treatment to a lack of exposure or education. For example, a 32-year-old Haitian male said:

For me, it doesn't matter, what people say of my color. It doesn't faze me... [Me: Have you ever experienced discrimination / prejudice? Example?] Yes, two Chileans once came to my house and they said "negro culeao" [which basically means "nigger asshole"] and "negro conche tu madre" [which means something like "nigger son-of-a-bitch"]... There are people who treat me well and people who don't treat me with respect. I know it is a lack of education, and I think that this happens in any part of the world. I don't have a problem with that. (Male, 42, Haiti)

Some outright denounced the discrimination or revalidated themselves, taking on a certain pride in spite of the stigmatization. This was important because it runs counter to Goffman's work which suggests those who have been stigmatized are in agreement with how they are viewed by society and therefore do little to actively disavow such beliefs. It also counters early work on Blacks that suggested that as a result of their experiences with discrimination Blacks' self-concept was damaged (Allport, 1954). Here we see examples of how appraisals of Afro-descendant migrants' collective identities are used as strategies to respond to stigmatization as a macro-focused act of destigmatization.

I am from the Dominican Republic. I'm proud to be a black man. (Male, 42, Dominican Republic)

I tell them that ignorance is disrespectful. That's my answer and I feel very proud of being a Black man. (Male, 42, Colombia)

My race is the ultimate. The best thing that has happened to me is being a black woman. I am fascinating and I enjoy it. (Female, 36, Colombia)

I say that our color is worth a lot and wherever we go we bring happiness because we are from a warm delicious land...I feel proud of having my color, of being whom I am, me as well as my family. [Me: Have people made any comments about your hair, skin color, and ethnicity? Example?] About my skin tone mostly, but no, I feel proud of having my color, that doesn't affect me. (Male, 37, Colombia)

A Dominican man, when responding to whether he had experienced discrimination, said:

Yes, some people have called me "black" and not black because I am a little black man who has good looks/good manners, but in their expression of the word. The way they say it, there is discrimination. Black is the most beautiful color in the world, but you know when they say "black" it isn't in a friendly tone or with flattery... I am Black, I consider myself Black and I am proud of who I am. (Male, 42, Dominican Republic)

And, when talking specifically about incidents of discrimination, he demonstrates resilience by saying:

Yes, in the subway and on buses, when you get on they look at you like "you are black, get out of here" or when one has a seat in the subway and someone comes who wants to sit down they say "get down you big-assed nigger" so things like that that lower your self-esteem. But at the same time one stays standing, because one has to be a warrior, one has to fight and not allow themselves to be defeated by those words. [Me: Have people made any comments about your hair, skin color, and ethnicity? Example?] Yes, at the same time they have a phrase here "big-assed nigger" which is like lowering one's self esteem, but in reality, he who feels proud of who one is, their skin tone or status won't matter. But with the heart that one has and the desire to work, one doesn't pay attention to

it. Instead one continues to go forward. (Male, 42, Dominican Republic)

This disavowing of racial stigma is enabled by a positive self-concept that more contemporary research on racial identity has associated with blacks (Crocker & Major, 1989).

Areas for Future Research

Power differentials between the stigmatized and stigmatizer will determine the degree to which people experience stigma (Link & Phelan, 2001). It is therefore crucial to explore more about that which mediates stigma. As a result of the multitude of existing hierarchies, things such as class, skin color (shade/hue), gender, country of origin, and language can have significant effects on stigma-related processes. I found that the experiences of participants tended to differ in some respects between those who speak English, and are therefore considered a higher class, and Spanish- or French/Creole-speaking participants. In addition, a number of people had come to Chile to be with a Chilean partner or had met a Chilean partner upon arrival. How does having a Chilean partner affect the perspective of someone's situation?

A focus on particular labor industries could yield key insights. The intersectional identities of Black women should be specifically addressed within this context. Those openly involved in sex work are currently absent from the study, yet some perceive it to be a major form of employment for Black women in Santiago. One interviewee told me, "You're talking to them [points to someone I had already interviewed]. They are just not telling you what they used to do." A major verifiable source of employment for Black women in Chile, like much of Latin America, is domestic service. A study could be focused strictly on the experiences of maids of African descent, since they are in direct contact with traditional Chilean population in their own homes, on a regular basis and it has been suggested that they are experiencing major labor abuses. What if they were to unionize? Is that a feasible option and would it prove beneficial given their challenges in the labor market?

Is discrimination against foreigners used to conceal racism? Many said that Chilean society discriminates against foreigners, but is that simply a form of prejudice that people, both victims and perpetrators, feel more comfortable being open about? Something comparative to begin to disentangle

the multiple stigmas that exist would be insightful. What are the experiences of foreigners who are neither indigenous nor of African descent and how does this compare with those who are?

Conclusion

In this paper, I have explored the migratory realities of people to Latin America from the perspective of an understudied and often marginalized and excluded population, Afro-descendant migrants living in Santiago, Chile. I addressed the following three questions:

- How does the process of stigmatization operate in the lives of Afro-descendant migrants in Santiago, Chile?
- What are the potential consequences of the stigmatization of Afro-descendant migrants in Santiago, Chile?
- What are the forms of resistance employed by Afro-descendant migrants to attenuate stigma-related processes?

The process of stratification arranges “individuals into a hierarchy of groups based on their imputed relative worth, utility, or importance to the society in which they live” (Tumin, 1967 as cited in García-Coll, 1996). The process of stigmatization involves various stratifying social mechanisms that affect the life chances of the stigmatized. For Afro-descendant migrants in Chile the process begins with them being labeled as distinct based upon the constructed social position factor of race. The stratifying mechanism of prejudice is employed to link these perceived racial differences with stereotypes. These stereotypes become the justification for Us-Them dichotomies and the social stratifying mechanisms of racism, xenophobia and discrimination. The co-occurrence of the components of the stigmatization process and subsequent devaluation and exclusion from Chilean society can limit Afro-descendant migrants’ access to economic, educational and health resources and opportunities. This can have the cumulative effect of reducing their possibilities for full participation in Chilean society and for upward social mobility.

The strategies Afro-descendant migrants employed to counter the stigmatization process have the effect of both reinterpreting their own realities and contesting the negative stereotypes used to disparage them. They employed a range of rhetorical strategies that, at times, reflected attempts at assimilating into mainstream Chilean culture and reducing the social distance that situated them apart from Chi-

lean citizens. In other instances they attempted to justify the behaviors of the stigmatizers. They also frequently articulated their own senses of self-worth and used appraisals of the collective identities Afro-descendants to revalidate themselves.

Results of this study will provide a necessary addition to current academic literature on the perspectives and constraints that may impact the migratory experiences of Afro-descendant immigrants in Chile. While this will only provide a snapshot into the lives of some Afro-descendant immigrants presently living in Chile, there has been little academic work published which gives voice to this population. This project focused solely on this population living in Santiago, Chile will potentially alter the future narrative projected onto these populations.

If the ultimate goal is to produce change in stigma-related processes, then understanding how stigma is institutionalized and leads to the denial of access to economic, political, educational and social institutions is crucial. Legal and legislative measures must be put into place to respond to acts of discrimination and provide for greater education and employment opportunities (Ainlay, Becker and Coleman, 1986). The media must used to fight back the existing negative images of Afro-descendants that lead to increased stereotyping and their subsequent devaluation.

Chilean policy makers are currently in the process of attempting to construct a coherent immigration policy. This study could contribute to a greater understanding of the social, cultural and economic realities of this growing immigrant population and result in more informed and critical decision-making. A large portion of the immigrants participating in the study will likely be from other Latin American countries. There is a dearth of academic research on the marginalization of Afro-Latin@s. While adding to this growing body of literature, this project will also permit the incorporation of perspectives of race and discrimination into development programs that attempt to redress social exclusion in the region.

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