

Uno de las cosas que uno se aprende aquí:

The impact of immigration to the United States on Dominican acceptance of Haitians

An honors thesis for the Peace and Justice Studies Program

Elizabeth Fusco

Tufts University, 2009

Contents

| | | |
|-----------|--|----|
| Chapter 1 | Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter 2 | Dominican national identity | 9 |
| Chapter 3 | Dominican immigration to the United States | 25 |
| Chapter 4 | Methods and Respondent Demographics | 37 |
| Chapter 5 | Findings and Analysis | 41 |
| Chapter 6 | Conclusions | 56 |
| | Bibliography | 61 |

Chapter 1

Introduction

While in the Dominican Republic in the spring of 2008, there was one thing I heard a number of times that surprised me. “*Los haitianos,*” some said, “*no son hijos de Dios,*”—Haitians are not children of God. People I considered to be accepting and warm repeated this to me in myriad forms during my time there. Santo Domingo, the capital city, was filled with hardworking Haitians, I knew that much simply from hearing them speaking Haitian Creole at construction sites and food stands, and as an outsider could not see much negative in their presence. However, I quickly became aware of a constant worry that Haitians would invade the country, damage it beyond repair, or hamper progress towards development. There was a two-way resentment between the Haitians and Dominicans I knew, and I wanted to better understand how it came to be.

On a small island of 18 million people, it was easy to find out what the problems between the groups were, because everyone had an opinion on the matter. But it was more difficult to find out where and why they started, and what the real condition of Haitian immigrants in the country was. The subject seemed too taboo to probe my friends and hosts about it. Broaching how to resolve a problem that stirs up so much anger was even more difficult, but the question caught my attention. I began to wonder what historical and contemporary forces were in play that could be used by those who hoped to create reconciliation, and which provided the biggest barrier to their work.

Hispaniola divided

There were no borders on the island of Hispaniola when Christopher Columbus landed there in 1492. Five centuries later, the line that runs down the center of that island is not only an official state border, but is also deeply important to the people that live on both sides of it. Haiti and the Dominican Republic share history, blood, and customs, but many in the countries also share a mutual contempt for their neighbor and its citizens. Further, many Dominicans have strong prejudices against the Haitian immigrants who cross the border eastward to find work, despite the economic importance of their labor. In turn, Dominicans immigrate in large numbers to the United States, and these immigrants are in a unique position to evaluate the social dynamics in their native country. With the ultimate goal of diminishing discrimination and mistreatment of Haitian immigrants and easing the tension between the two peoples, it is crucial to have a greater understanding of whether and how anti-Haitian sentiments among Dominicans can change.

On the Western side of the border, the Republic of Haiti, a country of approximately 9 million, has a GDP per capita (accounting for Purchasing Power Parity) of \$1,400 and sits at number 148 on the United Nations Human Development index,¹ alongside countries such as Cameroon and the Sudan. Two-thirds of the labor force lacks formal employment.² The poorest county in the western hemisphere, it has continuously declined in the face of violent and corrupt

¹ United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report 2007/2008 fighting climate change: Human Solidarity in a divided world* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 229

² Central Intelligence Agency, "Dominican Republic," *The World Factbook*, Washington DC: CIA, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/dr.html>

governments, failed international aid attempts, nonexistent or crumbling institutions, damaging economic policies on the part of the government and the international community, public health and safety crises, and repeated hurricane damage.

On the other side of the border, the Dominican Republic is drastically different. A population of 9 million has a GDP per capita (PPP) of \$8,800. It is above China and alongside many other Caribbean nations on the Human Development Index at number 91, indicating that it is on par with much of the rest of the region. Its main sources of income are tourism, remittances, and Free Trade Zones, and though the country still struggles with corruption, deep socioeconomic inequality, infrastructural deficiencies, and other important issues, its people are, on the whole, significantly better off than their Haitian neighbors on the whole.

Haitian Immigrants in the Dominican Republic

Haitian immigration is controversial in the Dominican Republic, and that controversy is rooted in the animosity between the groups. The flow of migrants, which began at significant levels in the early 1900s, was principally to supply cane cutters to the sugar industry. These workers lived in migrant worker housing, called *bateys*, on agricultural landowners' property. They experienced little integration into Dominican society, even as it became a more permanent living situation and workers stayed in the *bateys* year-round and sent for their families, building communities. Despite regulations put in place by the State Sugar Council (CEA for its initials in Spanish), the cane cutters have faced dangerous and demanding work conditions for little pay, few liberties, and little access to healthcare and education. Leaving the plantations without a pass from the owners was subject to arrest, firing, and deportation. Haitians are largely paid less than Dominican cane cutters, and even after the CEA implemented a policy of paying by weight of

cane cut, it was widely reported that the CEA cane weighers found ways to underestimate the Haitian contributions.³ Over 500 bateys existed throughout the country by the peak of sugar production in the 1970s. The sugar industry declined sharply in the 1980s, and conditions in the dwindling bateys have worsened, not improved, over time as unemployment rises and access to education, healthcare, basic sanitation, and resources remains extremely low.⁴

While isolation to the agricultural zone is still a reality for many Haitians, their visibility has heightened over the last two decades. The weakening sugar industry propelled the unemployed out of the bateys, and they were not only absorbed by other agricultural sectors. They found work in domestic labor; informal sector jobs, such as street vending; and the burgeoning construction industry. Some bateys were swallowed by urban sprawl and have become integrated slums, and Haitians have also created their own sections in poor and working class areas. However, despite their increasing presence in the public, Haitians still lack fundamental rights in the Dominican Republic.

The lack of certainty regarding the number of Haitians in the Dominican Republic exemplifies how contentious their immigration really is; estimates range from 20,000 to one million. These numbers are not only due to different survey methods definitions of who is Haitian. They are also political tools, with anti-immigration right wing parties citing the higher numbers and politicians trying to highlight success in anti-immigration policies claiming the lower numbers. Many of these estimates include even second- and third-generation immigrants who have never been to Haiti, speak Spanish as fluently as Creole (if not more so), or are of

³ Bridget Wooding and Richard Moseley-Williams, *Needed but Unwanted: Haitian migrants and their descendants in the Dominican Republic* (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 2004), 40

⁴ Bridget Wooding and Richard Moseley-Williams, *Needed but Unwanted: Haitian migrants and their descendants in the Dominican Republic* (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 2004), 42

mixed heritage. 500,000 is a widely accepted number, though interest groups advocating for Haitian rights point out that frequent deportations make that number inflated, and anti-Haitian groups say it underestimates the true magnitude of the population.⁵

A variety of factors enable the sustained mistreatment and manipulation of Haitians. Legal ambiguity surrounding their immigration status and that of their descendents is a major tool for depriving Haitians of educational, civic, citizenship, and social rights. Dominican law provides citizenship to anyone born on Dominican soil, but many have claimed that Haitian workers, no matter how permanent, are technically seasonal and therefore fit into a loophole in the constitution. The children of those who are “in transit,” such as Foreign Service employees of other countries and tourists, are not entitled to this right of citizenship. This uncertainty was resolved by recent legislation that affirmed that migrant workers are, under Dominican law, in transit. This issue of citizenship is fundamental, because those who are born in the Dominican Republic are often denied birth certificates, or given provisional ones, which do not afford them the right to public education or other public institutional services. Additionally, mass and individual deportations have taken place both regularly and unexpectedly since the 1960s, often with disregard for international norms and an individual’s immigration status.⁶

This legal strategy is rooted in a strong anti-Haitian sentiment that exists in much of the Dominican Republic. A predominant feeling that Haitians are wrongful in coming to the Dominican Republic in search of work, and a scapegoating of immigrants for myriad social and economic ills, is common in all levels of society, and has been a successful message in many

⁵ Bridget Wooding and Richard Moseley-Williams, *Needed but Unwanted: Haitian migrants and their descendants in the Dominican Republic* (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 2004), 35

⁶ *Ibid.*

political campaigns. The international community has pressed for changes in labor policies in the sugar industry, and a small but steady network of activists push for more legal and just immigration practices, particularly in the border zone. However, tensions continue to run high and much remains unchanged, and both the Dominican government and many of its people marginalize and discriminate against the Haitian immigrant population.

Is it possible for these anti-Haitian policies and practices to change? To answer this question, it is important to consider the specific areas in this anti-Haitian ideology where an effort to reconcile the groups could be successful. Although much research has been done to expose the conditions of Haitians in the Dominican Republic and the relationship between the two groups in general, how to mitigate hostility and raise acceptance is an area largely unexplored by scholarship. Broadly, in this paper, I aim to discern whether it is possible to reconsider this prejudice.

This paper analyzes not so much the dynamics and results of anti-Haitianism as an end in and of itself, but rather aims to understand the ideology in order to find the probability of and areas of possibility for change. To that end, I utilize a combination of primary and secondary research methods to discuss the development of the anti-Haitian narrative in Dominican history and the dynamics of the Dominican immigrant population in the United States. I then use this group, Dominican Americans, as a test case to explore whether the unique circumstances brought about by immigration can change opinions.

First, I argue that anti-Haitian sentiment played an integral role in coalescing a Dominican national identity, and that historical events were utilized by powerholders in such a way that resisting similarity with Haitians is a central aspect of contemporary Dominican identity. The project of identity construction was a long-term one, and I trace the historical

events and movements that led to and encouraged this development through close examination and analysis of primary documents and secondary sources. If an anti-Haitian ideology is indeed central to how Dominicans define themselves, whether implicitly or explicitly, this implies that changing the tense relationship between the two groups involves not just a shift in attitudes, but a re-evaluation of sense of self and values systems.

Second, I present the various viewpoints that describe the theoretical and practical confrontations Dominicans face upon arrival in the United States as immigrants. New Dominican Americans, suddenly a racial minority and immigrant population, are forced to somehow reconcile their country's narrative with that of their receiving country. Race and ethnicity are important in both nations, but utilized and expressed in different ways, and I reviewed the literature to see if this conflict tends to bring about changes in some Dominicans' understanding of themselves and their identity. The scholarship on this matter is inconclusive, and I explore whether the different findings indicate a possibility for greater sympathy with Haitian immigrants.

Third, I present analysis of interviews with Dominicans and Haitians in the Boston area, addressing the ways Dominican identity and values shifts upon immigration influence their opinions of Haitians. The interviews, combining qualitative and quantitative questioning in the instrumentation, are based on the narrative and evidence presented in the previous chapters, but provide space for both Haitians and Dominicans to challenge this founding logic as well. All respondents had sympathetic feelings towards Haitians, and their immigrant experience may have informed this opinion in several ways. First, the racial confusion Dominicans face when they arrive in the United States as newcomers to American society, and the discrimination many experience, facilitates an understanding that anti-immigrant and racist views should not be used

to unfairly alienate or exploit someone. Second, transnational forces allow for a fusion of the two ideals systems, meaning that Dominicans can hold traditional views but can re-evaluate these based on their experiences in the United States. Third, and similarly, the second generation and children who immigrate young acquire a greater integration into the American values system, and they introduce these ideals into their homes. Fourth, the majority of participants were greatly impacted by the experience of diversity in the United States when coming from a relatively homogenous country, having new experiences and seeing that things can be done differently than at home.

The Dominicans in the sample discussed transnational and transgenerational values sharing, the experience of being an immigrant, confrontation with a racial and ethnic identification system different than their own, and diversity as contributors to a new sympathy toward Haitians. Without changing their sense of self, or re-evaluating their racial or ethnic identity, these Dominicans revised their own country's values, unwilling to condone immigrant mistreatment in the Dominican Republic. Despite deeply entrenched cultural values, and immigration experiences that have, according to most research, allowed Dominicans to avoid challenging the mores of their home country, those interviewed articulated a sense of regret. Many questioned how they could criticize Haitian immigrants when they had been so criticized themselves as Latino immigrants to the United States. Respondents said that "one of the things they learned here," (*uno de las cosas que uno se aprende aquí*) is to overcome the prejudice and barriers facing immigrants and minorities, and this has left them with a sense of empathy and shared experience, allowing them to rethink portions of their nation's reality without necessarily challenging the rest, and remaining very much Dominican.

Chapter 2

Dominican National Identity

“The Dominican Republic is an island surrounded by water and Haitians on all sides”⁷

To fully understand the relationship between Dominicans and Haitians in the United States, it is necessary to explore the complex history of the two countries and their peoples. To fully understand the potential for change in Dominican attitudes towards Haitians, it is even more important to understand the centrality of this tense relationship in the Dominican psyche. The crux of the divergent history and identity of the two countries, and their peoples, is summarized by Bridget Wooding and Richard Moseley-Williams, sociologists working in the Dominican Republic:

On the Dominican side the history is portrayed as a sequence that began in 1492 with the establishment of the island as a colony of Spain. In Haiti the history of the country is traced back not to 1492, but to the settlement first by European adventurers and colonists after 1640, and – predominantly—by slaves from Africa during the later part of the 18th century.⁸

Wooding and Moseley-Williams emphasize an important dynamic in the Dominican-Haitian relationship: that their sense of self is based on conflicting conceptions of a shared history. This

⁷ Dominican Student’s answer on a geography test, cited in Pedro L. San Miguel, *The Imagined Island: History, Identity, & Utopia in Hispaniola*, Translated by Jane Ramírez, (Durham: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 62

⁸ Bridget Wooding and Richard Moseley-Williams, *Needed but Unwanted: Haitian migrants and their descendants in the Dominican Republic* (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 2004), 18.

conflict of values and mythology is rooted in both historical events and intentional governmental policy, and in the Dominican Republic has resulted in the incorporation of anti-Haitianism into an accepted set of values central to national identity.

Colonial Era

When the Spanish explorers arrived on the island of Hispaniola under the leadership of Christopher Columbus, they quickly created the conditions for a large-scale African slave system, and motion towards contemporary Haitian and Dominican racial identity began. In order to extract gold they found in the land, they principally used forced labor from the island's native populations—mostly *Taino* peoples whose population was estimated to be between one and two million. They also began to set up sugar plantations on the island, also using Taino man- and womanpower. The hard labor system, new diseases, and forced separation of the sexes caused a rapid decrease in population to fewer than 21,000 in less than 20 years.⁹ Children of mixed indigenous and European heritage were treated as part of the native population, so their strict separation and quick decline meant that their integration into Dominican heritage was practically nonexistent,¹⁰ a fact which would later be minimized for strategic reasons. The disappearance of the native population, and the inability of those remaining to do the hard labor, encouraged the Europeans to import African slave labor, which began in 1516.¹¹

⁹"The Globe encyclopaedia of universal information". Edited by John M. Ross. Publication date: 1876-79. Collection: Making of America Books.

¹⁰ Ginetta E. B. Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Racial Identity from Museums to Beauty Shops* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 4

¹¹ Peter Winn, "A Question of Color," in *Americas: The changing face of Latin America and the Caribbean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 293

The hard labor system of extraction and agriculture did not last long during the following decades of insecurity and economic downturn, an important turning point towards a more racially mixed society. As Spain's maritime power weakened, costs associated with trade rose, and gold sources on Hispaniola were exhausted, Spain shifted its attention away from the island and its European settlers, despite the colony's reliance on the sugar cane trade, and towards more lucrative, gold-producing territories in South and Central America. A growing incidence of piracy in the Caribbean created an added threat to and temptation for colonists, and helped give rise to a new kind of economy on the island of ranching and cattle raising in order to trade with the pirates. The frequent plundering of the coastlines by English sea captain Sir Francis Drake, in addition to the less aristocratic nature of the ranching industry, encouraged Spanish and wealthier *mulato* residents to flee the island.

The piracy was one of a number of things during this era that contributed to an overall shift in the economy and society of the island, and laid the groundwork for the eventual separation of the island into two separate territories, which up to this point were unified. In a pivotal attempt to discourage illegal trade with other powers, the Spanish government repeatedly burned areas of the island in the *devestaciones* (forced depopulations), especially in the Western half. Additionally, illnesses that swept through the country in the 17th century created a desperation that further broke down social boundaries between the races. The number of African and Creole slaves and freedmen surpassed that of white Europeans as the wealthy fled, fell ill, and inter-married with non-whites.¹² The new ranching society (the *hato ganadero* era) that began to evolve, and developed through the 17th century, was a break from the more traditional vertical power relationship between slaves and their owners. The landowners, their families, and a

¹² Ginetta E. B. Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Racial Identity from Museums to Beauty Shops* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 4

smaller number slaves worked side by side under this new system.¹³ This shifting balance led to an increased frequency of both social and reproductive mixing of the races. This intermingling laid the foundation for the mixed racial origins of the contemporary Dominican population.

As early as the 17th century, Dominicans associated race with class, and whiteness was established as an attainable status through money. The sparse European population relied on *mulato* and African freedmen and women to fill positions as soldiers, government employees, and clergy. Despite the increased levels of intermixing, the hierarchy of races did not change. However, to be white was a symbol not strictly of phenotype, but rather also of superior wealth, influence, and status, while to be black was to be inferior, un-free, and poor.¹⁴

The French had meanwhile taken advantage of the depopulation of the Western region due to the *devestaciones*, and settled themselves in what they now called Saint Domingüe, creating the basis for the Creole culture that exists in present-day Haiti. In 1697, the Treaty of Ryswick made the territory officially French, and they implemented a highly successful and regimented plantation economy based in tobacco, sugar, coffee, and cotton, that was once again dependent on strenuous slave labor. Throughout the 18th century, the slave population in Saint Domingüe increased rapidly. In 1739, there were 117,000 slaves, and by 1791, just 60 years later, there were 480,000 slaves, making up 90 percent of the total population.¹⁵ Many slaves escaped to freedom in the Spanish part of the island, but slavery was abolished in the French Saint Domingüe in 1793, amidst strife between rebellious slave groups, *mulatos* who wanted

¹³ Ginetta E. B. Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Racial Identity from Museums to Beauty Shops* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 4

¹⁴ Frank Moya Pons, *Dominican Republic: A National History* (Princeton: Markus Weiner Publishers, 1999), 16.

¹⁵ David Howard, *Coloring the Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic* (Oxford: Signal Books Limited, 2001), 26

more rights, and French power holders, paving the way for the Haiti's founding as a black republic just eleven years later.

Nascent Dominican identity and the roots of anti-Haitianism

The Dominican elite, despite the chaos on the eastern half of the island, identified a vested interest in maintaining the power structure of their society, embracing their colonial status and European connection, while Haiti experienced a complete inversion of its social structure and re-identified with African roots, rejecting European heritage. In 1795, Spain ceded the eastern half of the island to France in the Treaty of Basel, and though Haiti became independent in 1804, Santo Domingo (what is now called the Dominican Republic), stayed under French rule until 1809. The Dominican leading class did not want slavery to be abolished because of the implications for their power, and lauded Juan Sanchez Ramírez as a hero when he won the country back for Spain in 1809 as a colony, instead of as an independent Dominican state. The new Haitian constitution, on the other hand, declared that every Haitian, no matter what their skin color, was *noir/noire* (black), embracing blackness not only as a majority race, but also as a matter of national identity and pride.¹⁶

Santo Domingo's changing of hands would be the first of many, as the Dominican Republic would continue to struggle for independence for over another century, and the two nations became increasingly polarized. The two Haitian attempts to expand their power eastward, however, are particularly notable in terms of the current day relationship between the two countries. The first, in 1805, was a failed attempt by the newly formed Haitian troops to invade Santo Domingo. Upon withdrawing, they were ordered to ransack and attack all villages.

¹⁶ David Howard, *Coloring the Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic* (Oxford: Signal Books Limited, 2001), 27

This moment of destruction and cruelty has been extremely significant in Dominican ideology ever since, providing the basis for a stereotype of Haitians as dangerous that still pervades.

Much of the present-day Dominican animosity towards Haitians is explained, at least in part, by a fear of invasion and political takeover, rooted in the island's unification, the second (and last) attempt at island-wide rule. In 1822, the newly independent Dominican Republic was made a part of Haiti for 22 years. Although historians disagree on the actual level of cruelty of the Haitian regime and coexistence between the occupiers and occupied, they are certain that this event and the attacks in 1805 are remembered painfully by today's Dominicans as a shameful and dangerous time in the nation's history. Many Dominicans cite the 1822-1844 occupation especially as a demonstration of Haiti's desire to dominate the entire island.¹⁷

Tellingly, when Dominicans finally achieved a celebrated liberty from Haitian domination, it was to return to Spanish protection. Juan Pablo Duarte commanded his victorious Dominican force on an agenda of *hispanidad*, an ideology based on the three tenets of "Spanish heritage, white skin, and Catholicism."¹⁸ Dominicans celebrate this day as their independence day still, showing their pride in their Spanish colonial ties, and anger at having once been a part of Haiti. However, in the 1865 War of Restoration, the war for independence from Spain, the country was forced to reframe itself because of this close historical relationship to Spain and repeated return to Spanish colonial rule. If they were not going to be Spain's ally and colony, they needed then to develop an alternate narrative in order to distance themselves from Haiti.

It was under this confused post-Colonial climate of independence that a defined narrative of Dominican identity began to formulate. The narrative that emerged was one that

¹⁷ David Howard, *Coloring the Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic* (Oxford: Signal Books Limited, 2001), 28

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 23

acknowledged Spanish descent, embraced geographical Taino heritage (despite evidence that the presence of Taino blood was virtually nonexistent), and strongly rejected Haiti through a denial of any commonalities with its people. Thus, to be Dominican was to be un-Haitian, and to be un-Haitian was to be un-black.¹⁹ This mythological association with *indio/a* (Indian) blood, combined with a glorification European roots, has remained the frame throughout much of contemporary Dominican history, and have dictated relationships with Haitians ever since, especially in the 20th century.

Sugar Cane

In 1870, the labor-intensive sugar industry was re-introduced to the Dominican economy, changing the economic and social landscape of the country. It quickly became their most lucrative export, and laid the foundation for a more healthy economy than that of its neighbor. Sugar made up 43 percent of the country's export earnings, and along with coffee, cacao, and tobacco, was crucial in the country's progress and growth until recent decades.²⁰

As the sugar industry in the Dominican Republic grew, black migrant workers from the British Caribbean islands filled the growing need for manual labor on the plantations. They were highly valued and accepted workers, but the relatively healthy environments in their native countries and ability to speak English to American plantation owners raised the cost of their labor, and when sugar prices plummeted in the 1920s because of World War I, cheaper labor was sought out.²¹

¹⁹ Ginetta E. B. Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Racial Identity from Museums to Beauty Shops* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 2

²⁰ David Howard, *Coloring the Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic* (Oxford: Signal Books Limited, 2001), 18

²¹ *Ibid.*, 23

The relationship between the Dominican Republic and Haiti gained a new dimension in the push for new sources for affordable labor during an American occupation of the entire island from 1915 to 1934. Under their rule, Haitians were ushered in as a cheaper source of cane cutting labor in the sugar mills.²² This initiated a long-standing stream of Haitian migrants entering the country looking for work, which exists to this day. This immigrant population would deeply influence Dominicans feelings about their neighbors.

The Trujillo Regime

Six years after gaining independence from American occupation in 1924, new Dominican president and dictator Rafael Leónidas Trujillo initiated a contradictory campaign to both maintain the structure that kept the cheap labor running the sugar mills, and also to eradicate the “Haitian threat.” In keeping with dictatorial regimes cropping up worldwide, Trujillo sought to quickly consolidate power and control by creating a strong sense of national identity.²³ Due to the fast-changing alliances and social structures of the previous century, a common enemy and threat needed to be identified. Drawing on the ideologies developed in the 1860s, Haitians were pointed to as the Dominicans’ foil, and a rallying cry went out across the country to combat the Haitian’s “peaceful invasion.”²⁴

A systematic campaign of dehumanization, marginalization, and ghetto-ization of Haitians in cane-field *batey* communities was based in a philosophy created and actively propagated by the government, and the structure it created largely exists to this day. Future

²² David Howard, *Coloring the Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic* (Oxford: Signal Books Limited, 2001), 25

²³ Eugenio Matibag, *Haitian-Dominican Counterpoint: Nation, Race, and State on Hispaniola* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 145

²⁴ Joaquin Balaguer, *La isla al revés: Haití y el destino dominicano* (Santo Domingo: Editora Corripio, 1993).

president of the Dominican Republic and close friend of Trujillo, Joaquín Balaguer, summed up this philosophy when he described the Haitian as a “generator of sloth” and someone who “is indolent by nature and applies no special efforts to anything useful unless it is forced to obtain its subsistence by that means.”²⁵ Publicly, textbooks and public institutions decried Haitian influence on society. One school textbook said:

*“Haiti is inhabited by a mob of savage Africans. We Dominicans should be in debt to our blood. The Haitian is an enemy. Haitians should be transferred to French Guyana or to Africa. The Dominican race and civilization are superior to that of Haiti. Haiti has no importance in the world. The poorest sectors of the Haitian population are an ethnic group incapable of evolution and progress.”*²⁶

This social and educational campaign sought to ensure not only the current marginalization of the Haitian community, but also their continued discrimination for generations to come.

In 1937, Trujillo initiated a sudden and violent campaign of purification along the Haitian-Dominican border, commanding troops to expel or execute anyone Haitian who was not a fieldworker. An estimated 35,000 Haitians were killed based on their color, or even their inability to pronounce certain Spanish words. By the 1950s, Trujillo controlled the vast majority of the sugar industry, and was thus one of the biggest employers of Haitian agricultural labor. However, he did not let this dependence on labor distract from his plan to coalesce a more Hispanic national identity.²⁷ This two-faced policy of propping up personal profit with Haitian labor (80 percent of cane cutters at the time were Haitian) and simultaneously inhibiting any

²⁵ Joaquín Balaguer, *La realidad Dominicana: Semblanza de un país y un régimen* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta Hermanos Ferrari, 1947), 104.

²⁶ Alex Bueno cited in David Howard, *Coloring the Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic* (Oxford: Signal Books Limited, 2001), 38

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 25

non-labor community from building up was a crucial policy step in maintaining the whiteness of the Dominican population. Apprehension stemming from the era of Haitian rule and the dependence of the country's most profitable industry on their labor allowed the government to propagate the fear that they could "swamp" the country,²⁸ calling frequently and explicitly on the historical memory of the Haitian occupation and attacks of the 19th century.

To further combat this Haitian threat, Spanish Catholic identity, *hispanidad*, was the prevailing ideology and goal of the Dominican government. An alternative Dominican identity was presented, based in the ideals developed in the late 19th century, rejecting African heritage and common ancestry with Haitians. Dominican dark features and non-European customs instead came from mixing with Tainos, producing an *indio* culture. Trujillo and his government cast Enriquillo, a Taino chief, as the "founding father" of the nation.²⁹

They also implemented a policy encouraging immigration from "whiter" countries, inviting in Asian and Middle Eastern immigrants and entrepreneurs. Lebanese and Chinese storeowners cropped up throughout the country, especially throughout the capital, and were embraced even as non-plantation working Haitians were expelled on a routine basis.³⁰

The whitening of the country was even visible in Trujillo—mulatto himself, Trujillo worked hard to maintain his appearance light but also to surround himself with white advisors and proponents of white superiority.³¹ This era marked a strong shift in the country's identity. For their first significant span of time as an independent nation, Dominicans rallied around a

²⁸ David Howard, *Coloring the Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic* (Oxford: Signal Books Limited, 2001), 27

²⁹ Peter Winn, "A Question of Color," in *Americas: The changing face of Latin America and the Caribbean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 305

³⁰ David Howard, *Coloring the Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic* (Oxford: Signal Books Limited, 2001), 25

³¹ Peter Winn, "A Question of Color," in *Americas: The changing face of Latin America and the Caribbean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 305

constructed *indio/a* heritage. Trujillo's personal, political, and social campaign to whiten the population resulted in a long-standing set of cultural and political values based on his philosophies of *hispanidad*. What began as a political and elite philosophy, formulated by the intellectuals of the country and popularized by a forceful and powerful government, became a commonplace and widely held belief.³² Placed diametrically opposed to this hispanicity was blackness, and blackness was exemplified by Haitians, who were therefore the enemy.

Racial identity in the Contemporary Dominican Republic

Over time, the country has systematically tried to distance itself from its African routes, and most have adopted the term *indio/a* to describe the Dominican racial identity. Dominican racial identification and beauty standards may seem separate from the relationships between Dominicans and Haitians, but inasmuch as “*indio* has come to be an affirmation of Dominican whiteness as well as of non-blackness,”³³ and Haitians are identified with blackness, the avoidance of any sort of recognition of African heritage and blackness is also strongly linked to anti-Haitianism.

Popularized under the Trujillo regime, the term *indio* gives Dominicans the opportunity to recognize and explain the obviously mixed heritage of their people, while side-stepping any significant recognition of African heritage—*mulato* is not used precisely because it explicitly references being part African.³⁴ The national identification card, the *cédula*, was one of many mechanisms through which Trujillo institutionalized this label and the ideas behind it. It was

³² Eugenio Matibag, *Haitian-Dominican Counterpoint: Nation, Race, and State on Hispaniola* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 140.

³³ Ginetta E. B. Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Racial Identity from Museums to Beauty Shops* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 19

³⁴ David Howard, *Coloring the Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic* (Oxford: Signal Books Limited, 2001), 44

also a strategy through which to hide darker skinned residents in national statistics by ascribing them a term besides simply “black,” and the legacy of this is a country where an estimated 90 percent have African heritage, but 75 percent identify as *indio*, 16 percent as white, and 11 percent as black.³⁵ In popular language, the all-encompassing term is made more specific by qualifiers such as *oscuro* (dark), *claro* (light), *quemado* (burnt), *lavado* (washed),³⁶ and thus can be used to describe a large range of skin colors and features.

The difference between these categories is navigated by a complex and subjective set of rules and standards, some aesthetic and some class- and heritage-related. Within families, multiple different “races” can exist, and frequently do, but social location also plays an important role in how people identify others and themselves. The primary identifiers used to determine racial labels are skin color and hair texture (with darker skin and coarser hair considered darker, and lighter skin and finer, straighter hair considered whiter). Hair especially is important, and the predominant words used to describe the two extremes of hair texture are *malo* and *bueno*—bad hair and good hair. Hair texture is a crucial factor in determining how “dark” to consider someone.³⁷

Crucial to an understanding of race in the Dominican Republic is the idea that there is a hierarchy of race both in terms of beauty standards and social advantage. The mere existence of the terminology “good hair” versus “bad hair” explains the value placed on different features. *Negritud*, or blackness, is equated almost solely with Haitians and non-Dominicans. Dominicans instead embrace more intermediate racial categories, and utilize the term *indio* to separate

³⁵ "CIA - The World Factbook -- Dominican Republic". Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/dr.html>. Retrieved on 2009-01-30.

³⁶ Ginetta E. B. Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Racial Identity from Museums to Beauty Shops* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 19

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 16

themselves from blackness. Dominicans time and again point out how crucial European heritage and appearance is in their culture by emphasize their family's European roots in conversation, closely tracing their family back to when they came to the island, and placing emphasis on maintaining the European traits and light skin in future generations.³⁸

Anti-Haitianism Today

Despite the unraveling of the Trujillo dictatorship upon his assassination in 1961, the leadership of the Dominican Republic has maintained and promoted both overt and covert expressions of Dominican superiority over Haitians, as have the people. Anti-Haitian sentiments exist to varying degrees among different classes, colors, and areas of the country. Opinions differ about Haitians, and it is helpful to divide them into two categories: social perceptions of Haitians as a people, and political opinion of Haitian immigration to the Dominican Republic. The two are, of course, inextricably linked.

In the dominant Dominican perspective, Haitians are framed as the opposite of Dominicans. Dominicans are Christian, Haitians practice voodoo; voodoo is depicted in the Dominican Republic as black magic, while the Dominican rituals are treated as good, white magic. Some more graphic and insulting images and beliefs depict Haitians as vampires and cannibals, desperate and inhuman enough to eat Dominicans. Perhaps more telling than mythology, however, is that to call a Dominican *Haitiano* is the highest form of insult.³⁹

According to sociologist David Howard:

³⁸ Peter Winn, "A Question of Color," in *Americas: The changing face of Latin America and the Caribbean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 307; David Howard, *Coloring the Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic* (Oxford: Signal Books Ltd, 2001), 17

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 36

*High fertility rates and the more rapid population growth rates of Haiti have fueled fears of the so-called Haitian 'threat.' The migration of Haitian workers into the country is posited as the 'silent invasion' or the Haitian problem.*⁴⁰

This belief is obviously visible in opinions about legislative approaches to Haitian immigration. A study done in the capital and a sample small town (Zambrana) regarding approval of Haitian residency and work permits illustrates the way Dominicans feel that the government should respond to this “threat;” over one half were opposed to any kind of residence being granted to Haitian immigrants, and an additional one fifth were opposed to Haitian laborers being able to work in the country at all. Thirty percent approved only of strictly regulated and temporary labor permits.⁴¹

It is unclear whether exposure to Haitians has a specific impact on Dominican opinions one way or the other. In some parts of the country, poor urban neighborhoods and slums provide an opportunity for the two groups to mix and to build understanding and tolerance, but in other areas where coexistence occurs, such as the border region, animosity and tensions run high. Rural areas often are found to be less accepting of the immigrants, with residents frequently citing competition for jobs and the fact that Haitians are willing to work for less as explanations for their opposition. In one study conducted by David Howard, participants commonly gave these explanations even in areas where there were very few Haitians, no *bateys*, and little evidence of competition with Haitians for jobs.⁴² They are, however, are posited as the natural adversary in popular media and political discourse. As such, exposure or lack thereof may be less powerful factors than this dominant narrative.

⁴⁰ David Howard, *Coloring the Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic* (Oxford: Signal Books Limited, 2001), 33

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, 35

Black behind the ears

Many explain that their fellow Dominicans have *negro detras de las orejas*, black behind the ears.⁴³ The old adage refers to the black that exists, hidden from sight but ever-present, in the Dominican body and psyche. This complex relationship with their own heritage is part of a long-lived strategy of rejection of an obvious and significant slave contribution to racial and cultural heritage. Part and parcel of this negation of *negritud* is a negation of their relationship with their Haitian neighbors, who have historically embraced African heritage and blackness. However, this is not simply a naturally formed prejudice, but rather one built over time on colonial racial hierarchies, and later, and perhaps more significantly, a government social program to construct a strong Dominican national identity.

The fact that national identity itself was formed in contrast to Haitian-ness and blackness posits strong barriers to any sort of deeper understanding of commonalities or mutual tolerance. The fact that Dominicans identify (whether explicitly or implicitly) through national *and* racial vocabulary as *not* Haitian is not simply a common belief or prejudice. While not all Dominicans ascribe to this point of view, the majority does. It has been formulated as a central part of their sense of self, coupled with a strong sense of pride in the alternative *indio* identity and a European-Spanish heritage. This narrative upon which Dominican identity was built is popularly believed and embraced, but when Dominicans immigrate to the United States, the racial framework shifts, and this sense of strong identity, formulated in opposition to blackness and Haitian-ness, must be reconsidered.

⁴³ Ginetta E. B. Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Racial Identity from Museums to Beauty Shops* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); David Howard, "Reappraising Race? Dominicans in New York City." *International Journal of Population Geography* 9 (2001): 344

Dominican immigrants in the United States are also, in a more concrete sense, an important group to observe because of circular migration patterns and transnational networks that have been found to impact musical styles, consumer tastes, educational values, business practices and cultural values.⁴⁴ Ten percent of all Dominicans live in the United States, and through their impact on their country of origin is most easily quantified in terms of remittances, they also bring values, tastes, and trends acquired in the United States back to the island.

⁴⁴ Jorge Duany, "Reconstructing Racial Identity: Ethnicity, color, and class among Dominicans in the United States and Puerto Rico." *Latin American Perspectives* 25 (1998): 150

Chapter 3

Dominican immigration to the United States

How can we tell if there are any prospects for a re-evaluation of anti-Haitian sentiments among Dominicans? Dominican immigrants to the United States, because of their experiences coming to a new country and as a member of a minority group, may have a different insight into the relationship between Haitians and Dominicans. However, they may not—regardless, the way this population processes this experience and does or does not change their viewpoint can provide some insight into whether the dynamics between the two peoples could be changed.

The immigrant population is significant; in 2000, the number of Dominicans in the United States surpassed one million. This is especially significant considering that in the same year, the population on the island was counted at just 8,422,533. This large number is also rapidly growing. Significant immigration began in 1965, by 1990 there were 520,121 Dominicans in the country, and by 2000, there were just over one million. Although over one in three Dominican Americans is born in the United States, immigration remains the main source of growth in the community, and almost 300,000 Dominicans immigrated to the United States between 1990 and 2000.⁴⁵ The viewpoints and experiences of both first and second-generation immigrants, those who have lived in both countries and those who were raised by a Dominican family in the US, are significant.

Many Dominicans have experienced considerable hardship in the United States. They face high levels of poverty and low levels of employment and educational attainment, and have

⁴⁵ Hernández, Ramona and Fransisco L. Rivera-Batiz, *Dominicans in the United States: A socioeconomic profile, 2000* (New York: CUNY Dominican Studies Institute, 2003).

faced economic challenges in large percentages. They come from diverse racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, but the majority is from the Dominican lower-middle class. In the late 1960s through the 1990s, they largely performed low-skilled manual jobs for low wages. Dominicans in the United States tend to have low socioeconomic, occupational, and educational status relative to the overall population, as Table 1 shows. Furthermore, and notably, Dominicans tend to have very low economic and educational indicators even when compared to the Latino population as a whole.

Table 1: Dominican Immigrant Socioeconomic Indicators

| | Dominicans | Total Population |
|--|------------|------------------|
| Mean annual per-capita household income | \$11,065 | \$21,587 |
| Poverty Rate in New York City | 32% | 19.1% |
| Households in poverty headed by females | 38.2% | 22.1% |
| Less than a high school diploma | 49% | 20% |
| Unemployment rate | | |
| Men | 7.8% | 3.9% |
| Women | 10.7% | 4.1% |
| Source: Hernandez and Rivera-Batiz, 2000 | | |

Although this still holds true for many Dominicans, the trend is shifting as a new generation takes jobs of a more managerial nature and attains higher levels of education. In 2000, 60% of Dominicans over the age of 25 born in the United States had completed some college.⁴⁶ Despite this progress, the group as a whole has faced significant marginalization from the general population and the Latino population.

⁴⁶ Hernández, Ramona and Fransisco L. Rivera-Batiz, *Dominicans in the United States: A socioeconomic profile, 2000* (New York: CUNY Dominican Studies Institute, 2003).

Dominicans, however, face more than just economic challenges in the United States. The complications of the Dominican racial hierarchy on the island of Hispaniola, discussed in Chapter 2, are further muddled upon reaching the United States.⁴⁷ In the Dominican Republic, a black-white hierarchy exists, and people have long negotiated this problem by identifying themselves as somewhere in the middle, which is why the majority of Dominicans identify as *indio/a*. To be either black or white in the Dominican Republic is a matter of purity—both of blood and of skin color—and most acknowledge that their ancestry is not “pure.”⁴⁸

This system is in sharp contrast to the “one drop rule” that began during slavery for determining blackness in the United States, and this binary black-white racial system has forced many Dominicans to reexamine their racial self-identification.⁴⁹ There are two principal racial categories, with white considered to be above black in the hierarchy and Americans follow the rule of hypodescent—that mixed race individuals should be categorized with the group that is deemed to be inferior.⁵⁰ In the USA, the society presents black and white as the only two real options, and because of how many Dominicans look, they cannot be classified here as white, and resist self-identifying as black.

This conflict of identification systems is not only experienced internally, and transnational theories of immigration say that the dialectic relationship between a migrant’s country of origin and the receiving country affect both groups in addition to affecting the immigrant. Transnationalism, “the process whereby migrants establish and maintain

⁴⁷ Jorge Duany, “Reconstructing Racial Identity: Ethnicity, color, and class among Dominicans in the United States and Puerto Rico.” *Latin American Perspectives* 25 (1998): 148

⁴⁸ Ginetta E. B. Candelario, “‘Black behind the Ears’—and up Front Too? Dominicans in the ‘Black Mosaic.’” *The Public Historian* 23 (2001): 60

⁴⁹ José Itzigsohn and Carlos Dore-Cabral, “Competing identities? Race, ethnicity and panethnicity among Dominicans in the United States.” *Sociological Forum* 15 (2000): 220

⁵⁰ Jorge Duany, “Reconstructing Racial Identity: Ethnicity, color, and class among Dominicans in the United States and Puerto Rico.” *Latin American Perspectives* 25 (1998): 148

sociocultural connections across geopolitical borders” means that “migrants have multiple identities that link them simultaneously to more than one nation,” according to sociologist Jorge Duany.⁵¹ The theory is important in understanding the relevance of this research, and also in understanding the way that immigration may affect people. Transnationalism makes conceptions of self more complicated, and a dialogue exists between values regarding identity in the two cultures. Race, in other words, is made less simple by the act of migration.

Literature Review

In her study of Dominican racial classification, sociologist Ginetta Candelario identifies three schools of thought that explain how the Dominican identity is affected by immigration to the United States. They are useful in forming an understanding of how this may affect perceptions of Haitians among this population. Some scholars argue that incorporation into and confrontation with this new racial system “causes a shift in Dominican perceptions of self and other—and therefore, of Dominican identity.”⁵² The second theory states that perceptions are not changed, and resistance to a black identity is in fact strengthened, and anti-Haitian sentiment becomes more important. Third, some argue that possible identity shifts in the United States are not maintained upon return to the Dominican Republic, and traditional conceptions of Dominican identity are often re-embraced, indicating only a temporary or superficial values shift.⁵³

⁵¹ Jorge Duany, “Reconstructing Racial Identity: Ethnicity, color, and class among Dominicans in the United States and Puerto Rico.” *Latin American Perspectives* 25 (1998): 149

⁵² Ginetta E. B. Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Racial Identity from Museums to Beauty Shops* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 11

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Transnational re-definitions

In a study of Dominican racial self-identification conducted by José Itzigsohn, Silvio Giorguli, and Obed Vazquez, the majority of participants said that Americans perceive them to be black. Dominicans confront this binary system in a variety of ways, but one of the most tangible is the US census. The census does not recognize Hispanic or Latino as a racial category, but rather is regarded as an ethnic one. They must choose a race, and as historian Silvio Torres-Saillant says, “countless Dominicans, particularly dark-skinned ones, find themselves having to choose among options that their historical experience has not prepared them to recognize.”⁵⁴

According to Torres-Saillant, Dominicans realize quickly upon immigration that the dominant white American society often does not distinguish between them and African Americans, or other black immigrants, including Haitians. They align themselves with this group as a survival tactic: as a way to be a part of a bigger group responding to disadvantages and discriminatory treatment, to distance themselves from anti-immigrant and anti-Latino sentiment, and to seem more American than other immigrants vying for resources and rights.⁵⁵ They therefore embrace phenotype as the primary indicator of social categorization, and choose to accept their re-identification as black and use it to their own advantage in American society.

Furthermore, scholars of transnationalism challenge the notion that immigrants are not simply receptors of acculturation, but rather are also agents in a circular flow of ideas, values, and knowledge. This theory is used to both explain why changes in migrant attitudes and values are significant for the home country, but also to discuss the way that the collision of two cultures

⁵⁴ Silvio Torres-Saillant, “The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity,” *Latin American Perspectives* 25 (1998): 142

⁵⁵ Ibid.

influences immigrants. Duany argues that Dominican immigration to the United States has caused a shift in how Dominicans are defined and define themselves racially. Although they may not embrace them completely, immigrants more readily acknowledge their black roots and are more willing to network and intermingle with black Caribbean immigrants and other Latinos.⁵⁶ Other writers have also found that their sense of race and racial systems shifted after arriving in the United States, and they found themselves identifying with the struggles and concerns of black or Latino colleagues.⁵⁷ According to Duany, transnational conceptions of race, when developed in the Dominican community, allow greater dialogue between Dominicans and other cultures not simply out of necessity, as Torres-Saillant says, but also out of a greater recognition of shared roots and identity.

Maintaining the status quo

However, a more substantial body of scholars supports Candelario's second assertion, and say that Dominicans continuously reject negritude and African heritage and instead embrace a racial "middle." Mary Waters discusses the negotiation of identity among English speaking black Caribbean immigrants and the way they have tried to remain "ethnically distinct"—have intentionally ascribed first to an ethnic identity, and not a racial one—in order to stretch the boundaries of the binary American racial system. Waters describes a key survival strategy of West Indian immigrants, whose relative success in this country is based on a combination of being native English speakers and thus being able to transfer qualifications, an immigrant work ethic, a willingness to aggressively challenge the racial structure of the US because of their

⁵⁶ Jorge Duany, "Reconstructing Racial Identity: Ethnicity, color, and class among Dominicans in the United States and Puerto Rico." *Latin American Perspectives* 25 (1998).

⁵⁷ Vicioso, cited in David Howard, "Reappraising Race? Dominicans in New York City." *International Journal of Population Geography* 9 (2001): 340

origin in a majority-black country, strong interests in saving for the future, and emphasis on education.⁵⁸ Because African Americans have lower economic and educational levels of achievement, black Caribbean immigrants have tried to avoid incorporation into this group.

For these immigrants, to become American is to become considered a black American, and Waters claims that intentional linguistic, geographical, and life choices are made to separate themselves out as immigrants and as non-African Americans in order to maintain their qualities that encourage success.⁵⁹ However, the assumption by the greater society that these immigrants are African Americans often prevails because of discriminatory housing policies and practices, poor public schools, and, as Waters says, “ultimately...the structural realities of American race relations begin to swamp the culture of the West Indians.”⁶⁰ Often, the income and educational outcomes of second and third generations more strongly resemble those of the African American community, and many of these children come to identify themselves primarily as such,⁶¹ perhaps indicating that later generations may conform more to Candelario’s first theory of a values shift.

However, David Howard points out that Waters’ theories can be relevant as well to the Dominican experience. He says Dominican immigrants, and especially their children, have developed specific coping strategies to prevent identification as black, which is associated with socio-economic disadvantage, discrimination, and among Dominicans is also a historically unwanted status.⁶² Howard states that transnational forces may in fact work against a new racial understanding, as most Dominicans are in constant contact with the culture of their home

⁵⁸ Mary Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 8

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 12

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 7

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 8

⁶² David Howard, *Coloring the Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic* (Oxford: Signal Books Limited, 2001), 114

country, and that as a result the Dominican racial experience is in fact marked by stasis. Achievements, decisions, and changes as immigrants are judged against home country values, making immigration a conservative force for both the first and second generations, as opposed to one of change or adjustment.⁶³ Maintenance of Spanish as the primary language spoken in the home, he says, is key to the “retention and reproduction of racialized discourse” among immigrants and subsequent generations.⁶⁴

Linguistic Anthropologist Benjamin Bailey discusses the Spanish language as a specific separation strategy. The second generation of Dominican immigrants, who he says are often the first in their families to confront significant integration into American society, strongly emphasized in interviews that their language itself provides an alternate racial identity. When asked if they are black in their daily lives, many participants in his study said that they reply no, and offer “Spanish” as an alternate identifier. This strategy of separation allows youth to engage with black American culture and simultaneously remain distinct from it, though the broader society would classify them largely as simply black.⁶⁵

John Itzigsohn describes the category of Hispanic or Latino as a relatively recent and popular way of handling the two previously existing and conflicting identities: the self-defined Dominican *indio* and the society-defined black. Much like *indio*, Hispanic and Latino are terms that describe the majority of the Dominican population in the United States, intentionally identifying themselves as a people with a singular majority racial identity. Because Dominicans are aware that they will always “look different” than whites, they embrace Latino/Hispanic,

⁶³David Howard, “Reappraising Race? Dominicans in New York City.” *International Journal of Population Geography* 9 (2001): 340

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 341

⁶⁵ Benjamin Bailey, “Language and negotiation of ethnic-racial identity among Dominican Americans.” *Language in Society* 29 (2000): 559

which is originally an ethnic description, as their racial identity in order to resist the more dualistic mode of categorization.⁶⁶

Itzigsohn, Giorguli, and Vasquez also point out the level of consciousness that Dominicans have of this struggle between external labeling and internal self-identification. When allowed freely to choose a racial identification, the majority chose *indio/a*. When asked to choose from a list of common American identifiers, the majority chose *Hispano/a*, followed by Latino/a. As mentioned earlier, the majority of Dominicans in this study thought that others identify them as black, even though a much smaller percentage labeled themselves that way.⁶⁷

Dominican Americans and Haitians

In an attempt to translate Dominican ideas of *raza* (which include language, ethnicity, history, and national identity in addition to skin color) to the more phenotype-based American racial system, Dominican immigrants generally select a *Hispano/Latino* identity. This strategy has great value in some perspectives, but how does it bode for feelings towards Haitian immigration to the Dominican Republic? It may be that some understanding of Haitian immigrants develops from the complicated experience of racial adjustment and immigration and legality struggles, trumping long-ingrained prejudices. Silvio Torres-Saillant claims that

...in the diaspora, necessity allies Dominicans with Haitians; anti-Haitianism is rendered impractical. Nor can Dominicans in the United States afford the embarrassment of

⁶⁶ José Itzigsohn and Carlos Dore-Cabral, “Competing identities? Race, ethnicity and panethnicity among Dominicans in the United States.” *Sociological Forum* 15 (2000).

⁶⁷ José Itzigsohn et al., “Mapping Dominican transnationalism: narrow and broad transnational practices.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22 (1999): 50

*seeming to depreciate racially a community with which, in the eyes of others, they visibly share a racial kinship.*⁶⁸

In an interview for the program *The Americas*, Carlos Pérez, who is *mulato* much like the majority of the Dominican population, had never been discriminated against for his skin color. Seen as light skinned for most of his life in the Dominican Republic, he was perceived as black when he came to the United States. However, the interview exposes new points of view that arose after his stay abroad:

*As a light mulatto “I don’t have any limitations, because I get treated as a white.” But in the United States he experienced “what it’s like to be treated as a black. That’s when you feel: ‘It’s lousy when there’s racism in a country,’ and you start hoping that racism is eliminated.” But “on this island,” he cautioned, “it has been present for five centuries.”*⁶⁹

Carlos captures a significant combination of experiences, and his conception of how all people should be treated changed due to the minority status and racism that he faced in the United States. But the long-standing and deep-rooted racism of his native country seems too entrenched to him to imagine changing.

However, what other scholars have found generally to be true is that Dominicans see themselves as separate and apart from Haitians, partially because of their success in negating their connection to blackness even in the United States. In David Howard’s interviews with return migrants from the United States in the Dominican Republic, many still voiced a frustration

⁶⁸ Silvio Torres-Saillant, “The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity,” *Latin American Perspectives* 25 (1998): 141

⁶⁹ Peter Winn, “A Question of Color,” in *Americas: The changing face of Latin America and the Caribbean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 308

with the idea of Haitian residency or labor in the Dominican Republic,⁷⁰ even among those who were hoping to return, and even at the same time as many interviewed said they had experienced discrimination while living in the United States because they are perceived as black, Latino, or an unwanted immigrant.⁷¹

Conclusions

The existing research on how Dominican self-identification and values change upon immigration is inconclusive. However, the consensus among many scholars is that the Dominicans, when confronted with the American binary racial system, negotiate an alternate identity of Hispanic or Latino as a coping strategy to duplicate the *indio* majority classification in their home country. This re-identification is rooted in the values taught by the national narrative explained in chapter 2, and is used as a coping mechanism to avoid being considered black. This avoidance and creation of an alternate racial label is not an optimistic predictor of increased acceptance of Haitians after immigrating to the United States. However, where Dominicans settle, how much they integrate into American society, how well they speak English, what level of education they have achieved, and many other factors may affect this set of beliefs. Additionally, how frequent their interactions with Haitians are both before and after immigration is another variable that may change how they feel about Haitians and Haitian immigration to the Dominican Republic. The existing research fails to examine these components of the Dominican immigrant experience, and how they individually or in tandem affect opinions is central to

⁷⁰ David Howard, *Coloring the Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic* (Oxford: Signal Books Limited, 2001), 116

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 114

understanding the potential for any shift in the dynamic of the relationship between the two countries.

Chapter 4

Methods and respondent demographics

To explore the connections between immigration to the United States and anti-Haitian sentiment among Dominicans, qualitative interviews were conducted in the Boston area. To ensure greater understanding of events and issues that may inform participant's opinions, they were asked quantitative, likert-type, and short-answer questions regarding acculturation, language use and ability, profession and education level, and immigration history. Secondly, qualitative, opinion-based questions were asked regarding the participant's views on Dominican immigrant experiences in the United States, race, and Haitian immigration to the United States. All interviews were conducted in confidentiality, and the names of interviewees are withheld here because of mutual agreement with participants.⁷²

Respondents were gathered through community organizations and snowball sampling. Ten Boston-area residents, either first- or second- generation immigrants, were interviewed. Second generation participants needed to have returned to the Dominican Republic for more than three months at least once. The sample consisted of three men and seven women. A mother-son pair was interviewed to gauge the possibility of generational differences.

Respondent Demographics

⁷² Interviews are not cited directly here as a result of this confidentiality agreement, but rather dates and locations of interviews are listed as primary sources in the bibliography.

The ten Dominican participants were all currently living the Boston area, with the exception of one, who was visiting from the Dominican Republic but had lived in the city previously. All except one was from the southern capital-city region, who was from Santiago, a northern city. Age, occupation, education level, and language usage in the sample are detailed in Table 2 below. No direct questions were asked regarding socioeconomic class or income, however the education and occupation responses indicate that the sample has higher levels of professional and academic achievement than the general Dominican immigrant population, described in the previous chapter. All spoke Spanish as their first language, and most have maintained it as either their principal language or speak it with equal frequency and fluency as English.

Table 2. Respondent Demographics in sample

| | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Age | 18-29 years | 4 |
| | 30-39 | 0 |
| | 40-49 | 3 |
| | 50-65 | 3 |
| | | |
| Education Level | University Level or more | 5 |
| | High School or less | 5 |
| | | |
| Language Ability and Usage | Mostly English | 2 |
| | Spanish and English equally | 4 |
| | Mostly Spanish | 3 |
| | Only Spanish | 1 |
| | | |
| Occupation | Student (college) | 3 |
| | Service employee | 3 |
| | Not working (by choice) | 2 |
| | Professional | 2 |
| Source: Author's survey | | |

Immigration Experiences

All participants except for two were born in the Dominican Republic. Four immigrated as children, and six as adults. They cited a variety of reasons for leaving the Dominican

Republic, mainly for a better economic situation; a higher standard of living and better services, such as health care and education; adventure and to try something new; receiving a eligibility for a green card through a family member; and to provide for their family, whether by bringing them to the United States or by sending remittances back. Years of arrival range from 1963 to 1994, so participants had been living in the United States for between 46 and 15 years. Several have returned to the Dominican Republic since immigrating. Three take frequent short trips, four have returned for three months or more, and three have returned for few short trips since immigrating, or none at all.

Acculturation levels

Participants also responded to ten likert-type items addressing their self-perceived level of acculturation to American culture. Questions addressed who they felt better understood them, comfort level, knowledge of standards and norms, and knowledge of customs and history. The range of responses, on a five-point scale, are depicted in Table 3. Their averaged scores do not capture the range of responses given, as some participants felt that although they have a strong knowledge of American customs, history, and social standards, they feel more comfortable and accepted by Dominicans. The majority felt closer to Dominican culture.

Table 3. Acculturation Scale scores of sample

| Acculturation scale score* | Number of Participants |
|--|------------------------|
| 1-1.9 | 4 |
| 2-2.9 | 4 |
| 3-3.9 | 2 |
| <i>*Response of 1 indicating identification solely with Dominicans, score of 5 indicating identification solely with Americans</i> | |
| <i>Source: Author's survey</i> | |

Comments on the sample

Though the sample represents a diverse group of experiences, and their responses indicated a number of interesting ideas regarding the subject, and a larger sample size is necessary to further explore the relevance of the conclusions. Further, recruitment yielded a disproportionate number of young college students, which in the future would be interesting to study as a subpopulation. A larger sample size and further Haitian respondents were not included because of limitations of time and scope of research. The responses of this sample are not necessarily representative of the entire population, but do encourage further research on the topic.

Chapter 5

Findings and Analysis

The questions regarding immigration experiences, racial identity, and Haitian immigration all yielded an array of answers. Despite the diversity of the group in many respects, several themes emerged as either relevant to or directly addressing opinions about Haitian immigration.

Immigration Experiences: “hay que seguir pa'lante”

The majority of participants thought their migration to the United States was easier than average. Legality, language, networks, and prejudice were the most frequently mentioned determinants of the immigration experience. Despite the fact that some participants knew English well and some knew very little, all highlighted it as a central mechanism for integrating into society and being able to “do things well.” Two mothers in the sample mentioned that they put their children in English-speaking situations as soon as possible after arriving here with the hopes that they would be able to learn English from their children and have them as translators in the house. Having relatives previously established in the country—as long as they are employed and engaged in legal activities—was also cited as an important vehicle for finding success here quickly. Simply having a Dominican community was also considered very helpful, and one woman said, by way of explaining why it was easy to settle here, “where I arrived there were

many Dominicans.” Most also arrived legally, or gained legal status while they were living here, and said this facilitated a better transition.

Prejudice for some was the biggest barrier to success, or was seen as the biggest barrier for most immigrants. However, others said it had rarely or minimally affected them. Half cited subtle racism or anti-immigrant sentiment (often discussed together, or as one problem) as something that had experienced or seen, but not as something that affected their everyday life, sense of belonging, or ability to succeed. However, half of the participants felt that prejudice had been or was currently a dominant force in the lives of Dominican immigrants, or in their own lives. Two younger men felt many viewed them as criminals. One said, “a lot of times, even if it’s in broad daylight, I see women clutch their purses.” The other said that when he was in high school working a part-time job, if he had nice clothes, many people asked him where he got them, and suspected that he was engaged in criminal activities. He said suspicion of Latino males has had a lasting impact on him:

I’ve been called names... but even here [at my college] leaving the library late last night... I was walking next to this girl and I thought, let me just let her walk really fast so we both don’t get freaked out. It molds your behavior and character, it freaks me out, it’s crazy, it’s embedded in me now. The whole racial stigma has become part of my character. It even takes away the sense of having earned something... I think they must have given me whatever award or acceptance letter just because I’m Latino. I mean, imagine what the slaves must have been through, trying to move past slavery, that’s crazy.

Another youth that grew up largely in the United States pointed to discriminatory policies, and said that anti-immigrant policies put immigrants in a position where they are afraid to do things such as go to the hospital, even in cases of emergency.

But two first generation immigrants that cited frustration with discrimination here also both said, “*hay que seguir pa'lante*”—you have to keep going, or move on. It is important never to discriminate against anyone else, one of them said, even though she has heard people say bad things about Dominicans and been mistreated, ignoring it and continuing to do good oneself “is one of the things one learns when they come here, to not hear all of that.”

Conversations about discrimination often turned to discussions of positive and negative stereotypes and values of the Dominican immigrant community. They are often viewed, many said, as involved with drug dealing, prostitution, crime, and illegal ways of achieving success. They are stereotyped as people who are loud, play loud music, and refuse to learn the language. Some in the sample expressed frustration with Dominican Americans, saying that many of these things were true; many immigrate thinking that financial success will be easy, and turn to illegal activity or dishonorable behavior to make money or express anger. However, there was a uniform admiration among participants for the Dominicans who “do not lose their values.” They described their culture as welcoming, dignified, passionate, unpretentious and humble, and most frequently, hard working.

Race: “Mi raza es una raza combinada de muchas razas”

Race and ethnicity were integrated in the discussions about discrimination, however discussing them directly was less easy for most of the respondents. When asked how they would identify themselves racially, they gave a broad spectrum of answers. All hesitated, and several

said that it was a difficult question to answer. One participant asked if we could return to the question while he thought about it, and another called a family member into the room to talk it over with her. The answers ranged in language and meaning: *hispano/a*, Hispanic, mulatto, *mestizo/a*, mixed, Latino/a, *india clara*, and, “somewhere between *rubio* and *trigueño*.” Many said they give different answers when they are speaking to Dominicans, Americans, and Latin Americans.

A variety of factors were included in their rationalization of their racial categorization (which was not requested, but often provided). Personal values and behavior, language, skin color of parents, bloodlines, texture of hair, facial features, skin color, and class were all a part of discussions of their own race, the race of Haitians, and the race of Dominicans in general. Three participants articulated a feeling that they had been ascribed a race, whether by family or society, that they think is inaccurate. Several, however, mentioned the tension between what one would call oneself and what everyone else sees.

The response was much clearer when I asked what Americans would say Dominicans’ race is. The majority said, with little to no hesitation, black. Only three respondents gave other answers. Two thought Americans would say Latino, and one said *moreno*, which, as another participant said, is considered as dark as one can get, a less offensive Dominican term for “black.” One young man said, “They would say we’re black, right? It’s that whole one drop law, we’re colored people, so we’re black,” referring to the slavery-era American norm that even partial black ancestry made a person completely black.

Haitian immigration: “The work we won’t do”

All of the participants, whether they immigrated as children or adults, seemed equally aware of the situation of the Haitians in the Dominican Republic. All described a similar scenario, that Haitians do the dangerous and hard labor that Dominicans do not want to do and Haitians get paid less to do it. Many expressed a concern for the growing urban population of Haitians, saying that in previous eras they were not as visible and were mostly confined to the bateys. All expressed regret and sadness for the exploitative conditions of Haitians, saying they think it is not fair, or simply nonsensical.

Street vending, construction, domestic labor, and cane cutting were the areas where respondents had seen Haitians; only one personally knew any Haitians in the Dominican Republic, although some said they had spent time around their friends’ cooks and nannies who were Haitian. One participant, who immigrated as a child, returned to the Dominican Republic and spent time with a Haitian farmhand on his family’s property. “I’m all American about shit,” he said when I asked what he thought of the farmhand’s job, “I was like dude, what are you *doing?*” He said that his family was confused by his willingness to spend time with Haitians, and he described his confrontation with the situation as shocking and confusing. The majority, however, knew at least several Haitians in the United States. One respondent had a Haitian partner, and another said his best friend was Haitian. However, the majority had more casual, passing interactions with Haitians in classes, workplaces, and social spaces.

When I asked participants what they thought the real differences between Haitians and Dominicans are, I got a range of answers. Some said only things like language and food differed, and remarked on their shared heritage and similarities. Others felt that their cultures did not have much in common, especially in terms of religion. However, though some felt that

some Haitians do bad things, all felt that Haitians are on the whole good people, and should not be discriminated against solely because they are Haitian.

The majority of people in the Dominican Republic, everyone said, do not feel or act similarly. Dominicans “don’t want Haitians there, tainting our precious pearl.” The reasons behind this division and resentment vary. The Trujillo dictatorship, cultural prejudice passed down over generations, fears of the island’s unification, unemployment, and poverty were all credited with some part of the anti-Haitian sentiment in the Dominican Republic.

Four respondents articulated specifically that Trujillo had intentionally waged an anti-Haitian campaign during his rule. One woman said, “Trujillo was really against Haitians. He killed so many of them. Because of this whole thing, that idea that we’re under this threat, that we really have to keep them scared, so that they don’t mess with the government.” Another participant also articulated anti-Haitian propaganda as a way for the Trujillo government to solidify control, explaining that scapegoating Haitians was a way to take the blame for problems off of the government, a practice he said still exists widely today. Another said he did it to create a stronger sense of national identity, so that he could more easily appeal to the people.

Seven participants mentioned that Haitian laborers are unfairly blamed for domestic financial woes. All in the sample said that Haitians do work that Dominicans do not want to do. One woman explained it, saying, “what happens is that Dominicans don’t want to cut cane, even if they don’t have anything to eat, so the Haitians do it, and they get paid less.” The seven participants referred to the irony that these are jobs that even desperate Dominicans will not do, because they are too dangerous, embarrassing, or labor intensive, but that the Haitians are blamed widely in the country for stealing jobs. The unemployment rate may be high, said one woman, but that is the fault of the government for not having better social programs and building

more factories, not the Haitians. However, the resentment that stems from this dynamic was recognized as very strong.

Some referenced unification of the island as a source of fear, whether from an outside power, such as the United States, or from a Haitian coup. Some had heard relatives still living in the Dominican Republic say that there were forces seeking to take charge of the island in the near future, and thought this was a distortion of reality, that neither the American government nor the Haitian people had desires or plans to see the country become one. Alternately, relatives still spoke passionately about the atrocities allegedly committed by Haitians in the 22-year unification in the 19th century. Participants who mentioned this felt two differing ways. First, that the fears and anger from the unification were justified, but that it happened long ago and should not guide current-day actions. Second, three participants said that the unification had been “blown out of proportion,” in the words of one woman. The era was a long time ago, and its reality has been outweighed by manipulation or overuse of the story at the hands of the government and previous generations.

Many said that previous generations played a large role in passing down these ideas and allowing them to stay alive, regardless of where they originated. Children, including the participants themselves, grow up in households and society hearing the constant fears about Haitian immigrants, unification, and wage undercutting. Some mentioned that the increased visibility of Haitian immigrants eased the animosity in the younger generations, because they have grown up seeing what an integral part of the workforce Haitians are and seeing how harmless they are. However, others felt that the spread of Haitian labor into urban areas and off the bateys meant, or could be interpreted as, an increase in the number of Haitians entering the country, feeding anti-immigrant sentiment.

Possible governmental responses

Conversations about Dominican governmental response to the problem yielded different answers. Three said firmly that they should receive some sort of legal status, whether temporary residency or otherwise, and the rest simply felt that a solution is implausible at this point in time. The latter group had many reasons: mass Dominican discontent if the government were to make a move to embrace Haitians, the fear that the country would face an overflow of immigrants were they to implement more friendly policies, the inability of the government to provide effective infrastructure without the added pressure of expanding services, and specifically that the already-subpar schools and healthcare systems could not support an influx of newly-recognized Haitians.

One common theme throughout their responses to that question, and other questions, was a referral back to the United States as a frame of reference. In discussing why it is only fair that the government allow Haitian residency, a woman said:

I don't agree that here in the US they don't let us enter either, it's better not to enter illegally... but not all of us have the blessing of being able to enter legally, and there are people who have to get out of their country. We all know that in Haiti there is a lot of poverty... desperation.

Another respondent said Haitians are “playing the role of the Mexicans in the US,” and another said that Dominicans should “give them residency, just like they do in the United States, once they comply with certain requirements.” Discussing whether the Dominican government had the resources to support a legalized immigrant population, several referred to the fact that the Dominican Republic is not as wealthy as the American one, is more corrupt, or simply that the two are different. Ultimately, however, widespread Dominican immigration to the United States

and Puerto Rico meant that they could not justify the anti-immigrant sentiment in their home country:

People need to make money, of course they're going to go to the DR. It's happening with Mexicans and Dominicans here, too. Mexicans are crossing the border, Dominicans are flying here. You can't do that and then turn around and say it's not ok if they're trying to do the same thing.

Analysis

Immigration and Race

Concerns and discomforts regarding prejudice and race were dominant in the discussion of participants' immigration experiences. The rationale behind asking these questions was to probe at forces that may change Dominican immigrants' attitudes about Haitians. The goal was to see whether a difficult process of integration or a feeling of prejudice particularly influenced acceptance of Haitians.

The contradiction evidenced by participants' gap in self-perceived racial identity and what they thought Americans perceive echoes other studies. The tension in this recognized cultural gap for Dominican immigrants in the United States is notable in and of itself, and John Itzigsohn's observation that Dominicans continue to resist identifying as black in the United States, though they feel categorized as black by Americans, is further complicated by the racial identifiers that were selected. *Hispano/a* (Hispanic), mestizo, and mulatto dominated the responses in both English and Spanish. Many gave multiple answers or responded in a different language than the language in which their interview was being conducted. This indicated that it was not a linguistic problem, as even those who spoke English as well or better than Spanish

struggled with an answer to this question. One way in which these differ from the typical findings is the high frequency of *mestizo* and mulatto as descriptors; many researchers note that Dominicans distance themselves from this terminology because it acknowledges the histories that the term *indio* was popularized to avoid.⁷³ The less frequent use of the label *indio/a* may signify an awareness that it is not an accepted term in the United States, and thus options less commonly used in the Dominican Republic were sought out.

This racial discomfort, especially in the context of the view that Americans think they are mostly black, is relevant as one factor in their feelings towards Haitians. In this sample, several respondents made critical connections between slavery in the United States and the treatment of Haitians in the Dominican Republic. The dehumanization and generational discrimination of African Americans in the United States was cited as a warning against and parallel to the Haitian laborers working in the Dominican Republic. The multi-generational psychological and economic impact of slavery was related to the inability of Haitians to make gains in the Dominican Republic. As quoted earlier, one young participant related the impact of prejudice on his life to the impact slavery had on African Americans. During the interview, he simultaneously allied himself with the slaves, a discriminated minority group, and compared the Haitian labor force in the Dominican Republic to the American slavery system, connecting their experiences. Many participants made these connections in one way or another, expressing sympathy for the discrimination that Haitians experience, often through the experiential bridge of racial discrimination in the United States.

⁷³ José Itzigsohn and Carlos Dore-Cabral, “Competing identities? Race, ethnicity and panethnicity among Dominicans in the United States.” *Sociological Forum* 15 (2000); David Howard, *Coloring the Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic* (Oxford: Signal Books Limited, 2001).

This conflicts with Torres-Saillant's argument that the simple act of being immigrants and racial minorities alongside Haitians in the United States will force a reevaluation of anti-Haitian sentiment. It also conflicts with Jorge Duany's assertion that transnational experiences provide for a greater acceptance of African roots, and that this leads to greater solidarity between the groups. Transnational experiences, racial considerations, and pure necessity do play into the shift in ideas in my sample, but does not cause a direct alignment with Haitian immigrants in the United States based on commonalities. Rather, through watching and experiencing racism in the United States and confronting systems of inequality and oppression based on national origin and skin color, Dominicans are less able to rationalize the behavior in their home country towards Haitians, while continuing to embrace non-binary modes of racial identification.

Dominican Transnationalism and Haitian immigration

This finding endorses transnational modes of acculturation, in that ideas from each culture inform the understanding of ideas from the other. While David Howard argued that transnationalism works against the possibilities for understanding between the two communities because of a continued re-infusion of traditional Dominican values into immigrant lives through communication and media, my research finds that acculturation processes in the United States, however subtle, can promote tolerance. In fact, return experiences to the Dominican Republic or confrontation with conventional values can serve as a solidifying factor for newly adopted, more sympathetic points of view. The young man who returned to his family's farm in the Dominican Republic, mentioned previously, said that his experience with a Haitian farmhand made the issue more real to him. He explained, putting his hand out in midair, that the man who oversaw the farm for his family was a "poor, dark-skinned Dominican guy," but the farmhand "is a *Haitian*,"

he said, and put his other hand close to the floor, indicating that two people who seem similar in race and class by American standards can be in completely different social strata simply because of the animosity towards Haitians.

Similarly to Carlos Perez, the taxi driver interviewed in Winn's *Americas*, many participants felt that their experience as a minority in the United States taught them what it felt like to be treated as a criminal or discriminated against, and felt strongly that they would not replicate such behavior. This participant's insistence on talking to the Haitian farmhand despite the offense it caused to his family was echoed by many other participants. One woman asks the names of, talks to, and helps the domestic workers in her friends' houses when she visits them in the Dominican Republic. A young woman has had black boyfriends despite her mother's warnings not to do so.

The second generation: "Here, Haitians are just another kid in the classroom"

The second-generation participants in the study are not simply recipients of cultural knowledge and history, because they act as cultural and linguistic translators in their homes. They introduce American ideas, learned in school and American media, into their homes, fueling interaction of the two cultures. All respondents who immigrated as children expressed that they had, at some point or other, felt frustrated by family or community comments on the subject.

Importantly, the only issue on which young and adult immigrants differed obviously in the entire interview was whether or not they have Haitian friends. All of the people who immigrated as children said they do, while those who immigrated as adults have Haitian acquaintances, coworkers, or community members with whom they relate well, but do not have a voluntary and close relationship. However, though these adults have not established such

connections, their children often have. The mother-son pair interviewed both emphasized the fact that the son brought his friends home with him after high school sometimes, and she said that they were polite, respectful, and kind. She added, “they all kiss me on the cheek when they come over, even if they’re not Dominican.”

The lessons youth learn in school about oppressed groups and universal rights integrate into the way they judge their surroundings, and second-generation and young immigrants were largely the ones who drew parallels between African American struggles for rights in the United States and the Haitian laborers in the Dominican Republic. They respond to and understand both systems of racial classification, and understand the forces behind each system fairly well. For example, one participant said that his mother’s judgment of his relatives’ race made him laugh when he was younger. He would show friends the pictures of his family members and they would approach his mother repeatedly asking for explanations of her racial labels because to the youth, so many of them were “obviously black,” but she does not think of them as black. The second generation does not necessarily act as an Americanizing force, but does introduce American ideas and values into home spaces that otherwise largely reproduce Dominican lifestyles.

Bailey’s research regarding language as a tool of separation also does not leave room for the active participation of the youth in the changing of linguistic norms. Young participants felt uniformly passionate about maintaining their level of Spanish, and speaking it with any children they may have. Explaining why Spanish was an important reason he felt so connected to his Dominican culture, one participant who immigrated as a young child said:

All the struggles and the issues that their parents and parents’ parents went through, they went through in Spanish. So that to me is like saying to me that all those problems and

issues that they went through don't even matter because you only speak English and are forgetting about your culture... because culture aside, all the things that they went through, I went through in one respect.

However, at other times during the interview, he mentioned actively bringing ideas and new practices into his home. He said that he communicates well with his mother, and she has been able to explain his heritage to him, but he has also been able to talk about his experiences of discrimination to her, and translate when non-Spanish friends come over so that they can get to know each other.

“Because then you’re an immigrant too”

The majority of participants said they did think that their values were changed regarding Haitians due to coming to the United States, with the exception of three, who said that they had always had accepting values. The new experiences associated with being an immigrant were more important than the specific American value system in this respect. When one arrives in the United States from the Dominican Republic, the diversity of the country is an immediate challenge to the Haitian-Dominican dichotomy that exists on Hispaniola. Immigrants live, work and compete with people from around the world, and who look differently from them. One woman, explaining why she thought a values shift was inevitable for Dominicans, said:

...because then you are an immigrant too, and you're put in a different position. And you get to know so many different people, and your mind opens. It's not just coming here, to the United States, but meeting new people and other points of views, anyway, you just don't think of race in the same way that you used to, when you were there.

Many who felt that they were treated well as immigrants also cited the kindness of strangers and their community as a motivation to re-evaluate their opinions about Haitians. The fact that people of all colors had made space for them on the bus, or said hello to them in the hallways, made them wish for the same kindness in their own country. Many reiterated that Dominicans are welcoming and kind, and coming here made them see that the treatment of Haitian immigrants was not in line with their people's values.

In this sense, immigrants are at an added advantage to re-evaluate the relationship between the two peoples. Younger Dominicans' friendships with Haitian classmates and education in an American context also combine with a lack of repeated reminder of the Haitian-Dominican conflict. One young man said, "To people who grew up in the DR, Haitians are the servants and the menial workers. When you grow up here, Haitians are just another kid in the classroom." Despite conservative forces of immigration that would maintain anti-Haitian values, infrequent exposure to the conflict made it seem less important to many participants, and many said they felt it was a problem that was important generations ago, but had little meaning now. This sense of distance from the conflict does not seem to exist in the Dominican Republic in the same way.

Chapter 6

Conclusions: “Todos somos hijos de Dios”

One participant, who has lived in the United States for several decades now, repeated one particular phrase throughout her interview to express her frustration and regret about the treatment of Haitians in her home country. “*Todos somos hijos de Dios*,” she said—we are all children of God. This was particularly striking considering the harsh words I heard so frequently in the Dominican Republic to describe Haitians. The difference between the two refrains, “Haitians are not children of God,” and “we are all children of God,” is a stark example of the changes that occur for the Dominican immigrants in this study. A shift in context from the Dominican to the American brings diversity with all of its challenges into the laps of immigrants from a largely homogeneous country. The American racial system groups Dominicans not as a unique group with a specific ethno-racial label, *indio*, but rather casts them as part of a larger group, whether it be Hispanic, Latino or black. Dominicans face economic, social, and cultural challenges in the United States and these tensions, in this sample, resulted in a re-evaluation of prejudices. A frustration with being treated unjustly or witnessing injustice of people in their situations, at its end, became a desire that all should be treated, if not with kindness, with fairness. When discussing why their feelings had changed, not all of the participants had a changed opinion of Haitians themselves, but rather discussed prejudice and fairness as general forces.

The dominant mores regarding Haitians in the Dominican Republic, established as part of an effort to solidify national identity, are now deeply entrenched in contemporary society.

Resentment of Haitians, expressed as both an economic and social fear, became an integral part of the articulation of a Dominican identity, rooted in *hispanidad* and a mythology of native Taíno heritage. Negation of African heritage and blackness saw its everyday manifestation in anti-Haitian sentiment. The dictatorship of Trujillo was the key point in history at which this narrative was employed, but the ideas spread by his administration are still expressed today. Dominicans fear that Haiti and Haitian immigrants within their own country could be responsible for unification and invasion, social and religious corruption, and suppression of wages and job loss. This intentional process has taken deep social roots and has real contemporary consequences. In order for Dominicans to re-think their attitudes towards Haitians, it seems that they have to confront this narrative upon which their national identity is based.

The majority of authors on the subject accept this barrier, and some say that Dominicans redefine themselves upon immigration to the United States, embracing black roots or American values and identifying with other immigrants and people of color. These scholars find that Dominicans adhere less to the fundamental values and ideals of their nation of origin, which may allow them to be more accepting of Haitians. However, other authors say the dominant narrative and its implications for anti-Haitianism are too deeply rooted to change, and that Dominicans accommodate their new experiences in the United States to adjust to their values system, keeping themselves outside of the American racial system and maintaining Spanish as a fundamental separator.

My research, however, indicates that whether the story of Dominican nationhood is challenged or not (which it sometimes was and sometimes was not) all of the immigrants interviewed felt strongly that Haitians should not be exploited or mistreated. This research finds that instead of directly rejecting or continuing to accept the anti-Haitian narrative, many of the

immigrants in the sample re-evaluated their opinion because of the treatment they and other immigrants receive in the United States. Additionally, the experience of being racially determined as black also contributes to a greater understanding of what Haitians experience in the Dominican Republic. The parallels between the Dominican experience in the United States and the Haitian experience in the Dominican Republic are apparent, and they make it difficult to view the situation in their own country in the same way as before immigrating.

Further research into this finding should include a larger sample size. Additionally, richer questioning regarding experiences with immigration and prejudice would accommodate a subject that participants seemed eager to discuss. Equally as important, a more balanced sample would include immigrants who arrived during a wider range of years. Due to recruitment limitations, the respondents all arrived over ten years ago. It is also important to note that these surveys did not note or collect information on socioeconomic status, both in the Dominican Republic and Boston, which may affect opinions. Inclusion of Haitian respondents who have had interactions with Dominicans in the United States would also enrich the data. Finally, a richer analysis of qualitative data would further support findings.

While some participants had radically different opinions than they or their parents had in the Dominican Republic, others felt largely the same, with the exception of their sympathy for the plight of the Haitian laborers. David Howard's research with return immigrants to the Dominican Republic finds that they return to the Dominican value system when they return to the country regarding anti-Haitianism, and this study does not address whether increased acceptance persists after return migration. However, several participants mentioned that they discuss and argue about these issues with family and relatives still in the Dominican Republic,

and treat Haitians differently when they return to visit than they would have before, indicating that there may be a shift that perseveres upon return migration.

The majority echoed taxi driver Carlos Perez's sentiments when he is quoted as saying, "to end racism, the mentality of society has to change... And *that* takes a long time."⁷⁴ Most felt doubtful that the government would change their policies and practices, or even be in a position to do so, for a long time. The corruption and lack of infrastructure, many said, was too much of a barrier to even provide services to Dominicans, let alone Haitians. One woman took the articulation of this problem a step further. While living in the Dominican Republic, she had a clerical position in the immigration department, specifically on Haitian issues. She said she knew they did mass deportations when many people did not come into the office on the same day, and often thought of the bad treatment Haitians received and felt bad about it. She said that many people she worked with were not necessarily against what the government was doing, but were not for it either. They were simply "carrying out orders based on decisions that had already been made." In order to stay at their jobs, they could not criticize it.

In a government where much of policy has been formulated around keeping the Haitian population low, and not explicitly for economic reasons, it seems there is little possibility for the mentality shift that Perez says is necessary. The hopelessness of the Dominicans interviewed in this study also illustrates something important; they felt that though they had changed, it was unlikely that Dominicans in the Dominican Republic could. The experience of immigration was the linchpin in their sympathy towards Haitian migrants.

The maintenance of Dominicans in the government who ultimately embrace the anti-Haitian ideology means that policy will carry out an anti-Haitian agenda, whether overtly or

⁷⁴ Peter Winn, "A Question of Color," in *Americas: The changing face of Latin America and the Caribbean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 322.

covertly. Though the era of Joaquin Balaguer's presidencies in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s was one of overt racism, the current administration also participates in mass deportations and has passed legislation that perpetuates the problem of illegality among Haitian immigrants. How can the people of the Dominican Republic be expected to change their own mentalities if the government maintains a decades-old one? The Dominican American immigrants in this sample were able to develop sympathy for their previously devalued neighbors, but the prospects for their experiences to be replicated on Hispaniola while the power structure remains the same seems unlikely. Dominican immigrants realizing that "we are all children of God," and that they are "immigrants now, too" is a step in the direction of further understanding, but leaves Hispaniola far away from reconciliation and peace among its people.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Subject 1. 2009. Interview with the author. March 20. Boston.
- Subject 2. 2009. Interview with the author. March 21. Boston.
- Subject 3. 2009. Interview with the author. March 25. Boston.
- Subject 4. 2009. Interview with the author. April 2. Boston.
- Subject 5. 2009. Interview with the author. April 3. Boston.
- Subject 6. 2009. Interview with the author. April 3. Boston.
- Subject 7. 2009. Interview with the author. April 4. Boston.
- Subject 8. 2009. Interview with the author. April 5. Boston.
- Subject 9. 2009. Interview with the author. April 7. Boston.
- Subject 10. 2009. Interview with the author. April 10. Boston.

Secondary Sources

- Bailey, Benjamin. 2000. Language and negotiation of ethnic-racial identity among Dominican Americans. *Language in Society* 29: 555–582.
- Balaguer, Joaquin. 1993. *La isla al revés: Haití y el destino dominicano*. Santo Domingo: Editora Corripio.
- Balaguer, Joaquin. 1947. *La realidad dominicana: Semblanza de un país y un regimen*. Buenos Aires: Imprenta Hermanos Ferrari.
- Ginetta E. B. Candelario, 2001. “Black behind the Ears”—and up Front Too? Dominicans in the “Black Mosaic.” *The Public Historian* 23: 55-72.
- Candelario, Ginetta E. B. 2007. *Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Racial Identity from Museums to Beauty Shops*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Central Intelligence Agency. “Dominican Republic.” *The World Factbook*. Washington DC: CIA. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/dr.html> (Accessed

March 2009).

- Duany, Jorge. 1996. Transnational migration from the Dominican Republic: the cultural redefinition of racial identity. *Caribbean Studies* 29: 253-282.
- Duany, Jorge. 1998. Ethnicity, colour, and class among Dominicans in the United States and Puerto Rico. *Latin American Perspectives* 25: 147-172.
- Hernández, Ramona and Fransisco L. Rivera-Batiz. 2003. *Dominicans in the United States: A socioeconomic profile, 2000*. New York: City University of New York Dominican Studies Institute.
- Howard, David. 2001. *Coloring the Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic*. Oxford: Signal Books Limited.
- Howard, David. 2001. Reappraising Race? Dominicans in New York City. *International Journal of Population Geography* 9: 337-350.
- Itzigsohn, José, and Carlos Dore-Cabral , Esther Hernandez Medina, and Obed Vazquez. 1999. Mapping Dominican transnationalism: narrow and broad transnational practices. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22: 316-339.
- Itzigsohn, José and Carlos Dore-Cabral. 2000. Competing identities? Race, ethnicity and panethnicity among Dominicans in the United States. *Sociological Forum* 15: 225-247.
- Martinez, Samuel. 1995. *Peripheral Migrants*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
- Matibag, Eugenio. 2003. *Haitian-Dominican Counterpoint: Nation, Race, and State on Hispaniola*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Moya Pons, Frank. 1999. *Dominican Republic: A National History*. Princeton: Markus Weiner Publishers.
- Oboler, Susan. 1995. *Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives: Identity and the Politics of (Re)presentation in the United States*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- San Miguel, Pedro L. 2005. *The Imagined Island: History, Identity, & Utopia in Hispaniola*. Translated by Jane Ramírez. Durham: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Torres-Saillant, Silvio. 1998. "The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity," *Latin American Perspectives* 25: 126-146
- United Nations Development Program. 2007. *Human Development Report 2007/2008 fighting climate change: Human Solidarity in a divided world*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Waters, Mary. 1990. *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Waters, Mary. 1999. *Black Identities: West Indian Dreams and American Realities*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Winn, Peter. 2006. A Question of Color. In *Americas: The changing face of Latin America and the Caribbean*, 291-322. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wooding, Bridget and Richard Moseley-Williams. 2004. *Needed but Unwanted: Haitian migrants and their descendants in the Dominican Republic*. London: Catholic Institute for International Relations.