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Dominican migration to Puerto Rico: A transnational perspective

JORGE DUANY

ABSTRACT

This essay provides a panoramic view of transnational migration from the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico. To begin, the author sketches the historical background of the exodus, underlining the ties between the two neighboring countries since the days of Spanish colonialism in the Caribbean. The main economic and political causes of the recent Dominican diaspora are also described. Second, the author examines the migrants' regional and socioeconomic origins in the home country as well as their settlement patterns and modes of economic and political incorporation into the host country. Third, several Dominican transnational practices in Puerto Rico are analyzed, particularly their community organization, through various political parties, hometown clubs, and other voluntary associations. Finally, the author identifies six issues for further study: the immigrants' cultural identity, second generation, transnational organizations, impact on public services, remittances, and businesses. [Keywords: migration, transnationalism, diaspora, identity, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico]



An overcrowded yola transporting undocumented immigrants in the waters between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. Photographer Ramon Tonito Zayas. Reprinted, by permission, from El Nuevo Día. © El Nuevo Día/Ramón Tonito Zayas.

For more than a decade, Dominican migrants have been considered a prototypical case of transnationalism. A growing share of the population of the Dominican Republic lives abroad (at least 10 percent in the year 2000). The migrants' remittances (an estimated U.S. \$1.8 billion in 2001) represent the second leading source of foreign currency in the home country, after tourism (Orozco 2002).

Dominican transnationalism is most forcefully expressed through long-distance kinship networks, households, and child-rearing practices. The approval of dual citizenship by the Dominican legislature in 1994 is the clearest example of the divided political loyalties that transcend the nation-state. The constant circulation of cultural values, practices, and identities between the Dominican Republic and the United States has been well documented (Duany 1994; Guarnizo 1994; Itzigsohn, Dore Cabral, Hernández Medina, and Vázquez 1999; Levitt 2001). Some scholars have argued that Dominican-Americans are better understood as a diasporic people than as a transnational community (Castro and Boswell 2002; Torres-Saillant 2000). For the Dominican-American literary critic Silvio Torres-Saillant (1999), the concept of the diaspora—in the sense of a people who continue to see themselves a part of their nation of origin, regardless of their current place of residence—describes the contemporary immigrant experience of Dominicans better than that of transnationalism. Be that as it may, the strength, frequency, and diffusion of social ties between Dominicans on and off the Island remain undisputed.

Elsewhere I have argued that Dominican migrants in the United States are “characterized by a constant flow of people in both directions, a dual sense of identity, ambivalent attachments to two nations, and a far-flung network of kinship and friendship ties across state frontiers” (Duany 1994: 2). More recently, I have elaborated a transnational theoretical framework to conceptualize the massive flow of people between the Dominican Republic and the United States as a process embedded in the globalization of the world economy (Duany 2004). I have also proposed that Dominicans in Puerto Rico can usefully be approached from a transnational perspective, although Puerto Rico is not a sovereign nation (Duany 1997, 1998). However, Dominicans in Puerto Rico have created a transnational identity insofar as they retain strong social, cultural, economic, and political links with their homeland, even when they live abroad for long periods of time. In this regard, they can also be considered “diasporic” in Torres-Saillant’s use of the term. The case of Dominicans in Puerto Rico exemplifies how contemporary migrants can reconstruct their cultural identities based on ethnicity, race, and nationality across geopolitical borders—identifications that are exactly what the transnational approach aims to describe and explain.

In recent years, Dominican migration has become increasingly scattered in North America, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Europe. In addition to the continental United States, Dominicans have established sizeable communities in a dozen other countries, including Puerto Rico, Spain, Venezuela, Curaçao, Aruba, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Canada, Panama, and Martinique. The massive displacement of people to the United States and elsewhere is popularly known in the Dominican Republic as *irse a los países* (literally, “moving to the countries”). The plural and generic way that Dominicans refer to their current migration patterns suggests a far-flung circuit linking the Dominican Republic not just with the United States but with many other places. It also suggests the development of Dominican transnational or diasporic identities in various settlements throughout the world.

For years, the secondary concentration of Dominicans abroad has been in Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory with a higher standard of living but a geography, history, culture, and language similar to the Dominican Republic. Dominicans began to migrate en masse after the assassination of longtime dictator Rafael Leónidas Trujillo (1961), the coup d'état against constitutional president Juan Bosch (1963), and the civil war and U.S. military occupation of Santo Domingo (1965). These political events set in motion a complex series of socioeconomic forces leading tens of thousands of Dominicans to Puerto Rico over the past four decades. Although the Island has often served as a springboard to the U.S. mainland, a bustling Dominican community has emerged in San Juan, displacing Cubans as the leading sector of the foreign-born population in the 1980s. In 2000, San Juan had the second largest number of Dominicans outside the Dominican Republic, after New York City. Their demographic, economic, social, political, and cultural significance for contemporary Dominican transnationalism cannot be overlooked.

This essay provides a panoramic view of transnational migration from the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico. To begin, I sketch the historical background of the exodus, underlining the ties between the two neighboring countries since the days of Spanish colonialism in the Caribbean. I also describe the main economic and political causes of the recent Dominican diaspora. Second, I examine the migrants' regional and socioeconomic origins in the home country as well as their settlement patterns and modes of economic and political incorporation into the host country. Third, I analyze several Dominican transnational practices in Puerto Rico, particularly their community organization through various political parties, hometown clubs, and other voluntary associations. Finally, I identify six issues for further study: the immigrants' cultural identity, second generation, transnational organizations, impact on public services, remittances, and businesses.

Historical background

TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIONS

Close links between what are now the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico date back to pre-Columbian times, when Arawak peoples originating in the Amazon basin of South America settled both territories. In the late 15th and early 16th centuries, Spain conquered the two places and remained in control until the 19th century. A small but constant flow of people in both directions occurred between the 16th and 19th centuries, including bureaucrats, soldiers, clerics, professionals, students, artisans, and slaves (Pérez Memén 1989; Rosario Natal 1990). During the 19th century, hundreds of exiles moved from the island of Hispaniola to Puerto Rico, primarily as a result of political upheavals, such as Spain's cession of the island to France (1795), the triumph of the Haitian Revolution (1804), and the Haitian occupation of Santo Domingo (1822–1844). The émigrés included white property-owners, black slaves, and mulatto workers, who tended to settle in the western region of Puerto Rico, particularly around the cities of Mayagüez and San Germán (Camuñas Madera 1999; Marazzi 1974; Rosario Natal 1995).

The primary direction of the transnational flow of people reversed itself at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. The swift development of the Dominican sugar industry, centered around the eastern provinces of San Pedro de Macorís, La Romana, and Puerto Plata, attracted thousands of workers from other Caribbean islands, including Puerto Rico. Historians have documented the growing Puerto Rican presence in the Dominican Republic during the first third of the 20th

century (del Castillo 1990 [1981]; Pérez Memén 1989; Rosario Natal 1983; Soto Toledo 1998). In 1920, the Dominican census counted 6,069 Puerto Ricans living in the Dominican Republic (Secretaría de lo Interior y Policía 1923: 129). Because of their linguistic, cultural, and religious affinities, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans quickly intermarried. As a result, second-generation immigrants usually identified themselves as Dominican, not as Puerto Rican. The two most famous cases are former presidents Joaquín Balaguer and Juan Bosch, both of whom had a mixed Dominican and Puerto Rican parentage. Pedro Mir, one of the most distinguished contemporary poets of the Dominican Republic, has a Puerto Rican mother. The prominent Puerto Rican writer, José Luis González, was born in Santo Domingo of Puerto Rican parents, but moved to San Juan at a young age.

Between 1930 and 1960, few Puerto Ricans migrated to the Dominican Republic and few Dominicans migrated to Puerto Rico. During this period, the vast majority of Puerto Rican migrants relocated to the U.S. mainland, especially New York City. In the 1940s, Puerto Rican migration to the Dominican Republic practically stopped. By 1950, the Dominican census found only 2,216 Puerto Ricans living in that country (Oficina Nacional del Censo 1958: 135). Because of strict controls by the Trujillo regime, most Dominicans were unable to travel abroad; those who did were predominantly prosperous entrepreneurs, professionals, or political exiles, including a few hundred who settled in Puerto Rico. In 1959, only 1,805 Dominican passports were issued, out of 19,631 applications (Canelo 1982: 42; cited by Hernández 2002: 40). In 1960, the census of Puerto Rico counted 1,812 Dominican residents on the Island (U.S. Department of Commerce 1961). Some of these were descendants of earlier Puerto Rican migrants to the Dominican Republic.

Large-scale migration from the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico took off in 1961 with Trujillo's death and intensified with U.S. intervention in Santo Domingo in 1965. Between 1966 and 2002, a total of 118,999 Dominicans were legally admitted as immigrants in San Juan (see table 1). This figure represents 12 percent of the Dominican exodus to the United States between 1961 and 2002 (U.S. Department of Justice 2003). In addition, an unknown number of people have entered the Island illegally or overstayed their tourist visas. Census data confirm the spectacular growth of the Dominican population in Puerto Rico, multiplying 34 times between 1960 and 2000 (table 2). At the same time, Dominicans increased their share of the foreign born more than three times. No other sector of Puerto Rico's population has grown as quickly as the Dominican-born over the last four decades. Dominicans are now the largest and most visible ethnic minority on the Island.

TABLE 1
Dominicans admitted as immigrants to Puerto Rico, 1966–2002

1966 .....3,898	1976 .....2,093	1986 .....2,944	1996 .....7,354
1967 .....2,358	1977 .....1,276	1987 .....3,199	1997 .....4,162
1968 .....1,751	1978 .....2,498	1988 .....3,618	1998 .....2,647
1969 .....2,042	1979 .....1,875	1989 .....3,535	1999 .....2,141
1970 .....2,229	1980 .....n.a.	1990 .....5,804	2000 .....1,520
1971 .....2,589	1981 .....n.a.	1991 .....9,014	2001 .....1,854
1972 .....2,335	1982 .....2,189	1992 .....5,088	2002 .....2,250
1973 .....2,400	1983 .....2,186	1993 .....6,462	
1974 .....2,735	1984 .....2,580	1994 .....9,390	
1975 .....1,980	1985 .....2,756	1995 .....6,247	
		TOTAL .....118,999	

Source: U.S. Department of Justice □1967–2003 □Note: The Immigration and Naturalization Service did not collect separate data for Dominican immigrants to Puerto Rico before 1966.

TABLE 2

The Dominican-born population of Puerto Rico, 1960–2000

YEAR	NUMBER	PERCENT OF ALL FOREIGN-BORN
1960	1,812	17.7
1970	10,843	13.4
1980	20,558	29.0
1990	37,505	50.0
2000	61,455	56.1

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce □1961, 1973, 1984, 1993 □U.S. Bureau of the Census □2001 □

Political factors precipitating the exodus

Most scholars agree that political forces largely drove the first stage of Dominican emigration during the 1960s (Georges 1984; Grasmuck and Pessar 1991; Torres-Saillant and Hernández 1998). The earliest groups to leave the Dominican Republic after 1961 were primarily people linked with the Trujillo dictatorship, especially conservative political leaders, government employees, and members of the ruling class. Among those who briefly sought refuge in Puerto Rico in 1962 was former president Balaguer. A year later, a civic-military coalition overthrew the recently elected president Bosch, provoking a second migratory wave of liberal and leftist elements. Bosch himself was quickly flown into San Juan, where he had previously lived in exile. The 1965 civil war and U.S. invasion culminated a cycle of political violence in the Dominican Republic, which led to the export of political dissidents to the United States and Puerto Rico. As several authors have documented, the U.S. Embassy in Santo Domingo gave hundreds of exit visas to persons deemed radical or subversive to the newly established regime, presided over by Balaguer for three consecutive terms (1966–1978). Ambassador John Bartlow Martin openly facilitated the migration process as part of U.S. foreign policy to stabilize the Dominican Republic and avoid “another Cuba” (Hernández 2002; Mitchell 1992).

Political factors have continued to play a role in the Dominican exodus, even during periods of relative democratization. Table 1 shows that migration to Puerto Rico has tended to peak in years of presidential elections in the Dominican Republic. For instance, Balaguer's reelection in 1966, 1970, 1974, 1986, and 1990 spurred migration to Puerto Rico. When Balaguer died in 2002, many expatriates in San Juan felt relieved because of his prominent role under the Trujillo dictatorship and subsequent repressive tactics. Today, the immigrant community is highly politicized by local sections of the three major parties in the Dominican Republic—the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD), the Dominican Liberation Party (PLD), and the Social Christian Reformist Party (PRSC). Because of their ideological diversity, Dominicans in Puerto Rico do not form a single voting bloc or lobbying group (unlike Cuban exiles, for example); nor do they have a unified voice in the Dominican Republic. I will return to this point shortly.

Economic factors precipitating the exodus

Since the 1970s, material hardship has increasingly motivated the Dominican exodus. When asked why they came to Puerto Rico, many Dominicans reply, “searching for a better life” (*buscando mejor vida*). Three-fifths of the immigrants surveyed in Santurce, an area of San Juan with a large Dominican population, said they were looking for a job or higher salaries (Thompson 1990: 107). However, most had been employed in the Dominican Republic, many as skilled workers such as mechanics, masons,

seamstresses, and nurses. Other studies have confirmed that Dominican migration to Puerto Rico draws primarily on the employed labor force in the Dominican Republic (Pascual Morán and Figueroa 2000; Peralta 1995). The basic economic reason for the large-scale displacement of Dominicans to Puerto Rico is the wide discrepancy in the wage levels of the two countries—especially since the early 1980s, with the constant devaluation of the Dominican *peso* vis-à-vis the U.S. dollar (the currency used in Puerto Rico). When I wrote the first draft of this essay in July 2003, the official exchange rate was 34.5 *pesos* for every dollar. When I completed the final version in March 2004, the value of the Dominican peso hovered around 45 per U.S. dollar.

During the 1980s, the economic crisis in the Dominican Republic increased the number of migrants to Puerto Rico. Growing unemployment and underemployment; the rising cost of living; a chaotic transportation system; and the near collapse in the provision of basic public services, such as electricity, running water, housing, health, and education were powerful incentives to move abroad (Selman Fernández, Tavarez María, and Puello Nina 1990; Thompson 1990). In addition, the Dominican economy experienced declining prices for traditional export crops (including sugar, coffee, cocoa, and tobacco); rising prices for oil, foodstuffs, and other imported commodities; an increasing deficit in the balance of payments; and a growing foreign debt (Enchautegui 2000; Grasmuck and Pessar 1991; Ortiz Negrón 1988; Pascual Morán and Figueroa 2000). One of the responses to the crisis was a new development strategy, embraced by the Dominican government, based on the promotion of export manufacturing (especially through the *zonas francas*, or free trade zones), tourism, and nontraditional agricultural exports. Although this strategy stimulated rapid economic growth during the 1990s, it did not improve living conditions for most Dominicans. Instead, unemployment and poverty levels have expanded considerably since the 1970s (Hernández 2002; Torres-Saillant and Hernández 1998). Hence, emigration has become a common survival strategy for growing numbers of the lower and middle classes of the Dominican Republic. The recent economic and political crisis under President Hipólito Mejía (2000–2004) has spurred further emigration.

Differences between Puerto Rico-bound and U.S.-bound migration

A comparison between Dominican migration to Puerto Rico and the continental United States reveals several important differences. First, the number of Dominican migrants to the Island is much smaller than to the mainland (about one-eighth of all those admitted between 1961 and 2002). Second, Dominicans in Puerto Rico tend to be less educated, urban, and skilled than in the continental United States.¹ For instance, in 1990, 56.5 percent of Dominicans in Puerto Rico had completed less than a high school education, compared to 52.3 percent in New York City (Hernández, Rivera-Batiz, and Agodini 1995: 34; Rivera-Batiz 1994: 14). Third, Dominican households in Puerto Rico tend to be smaller, with an average of three members, than in New York, with an average of four, and in the Dominican Republic, with five. Fourth, most Dominicans in Puerto Rico are employed in domestic service, retail trade, and construction, whereas Dominicans in the United States concentrate in retail trade, light manufacturing, and professional services (Duany 1990; Hernández 2002). Finally, as I will elaborate below, a much larger proportion of Dominicans are undocumented immigrants in Puerto Rico than in the continental United States.

The main contrasts between Puerto Rico-bound and U.S.-bound migration can be attributed to geographic, economic, and cultural reasons. An airplane trip from Santo Domingo to San Juan lasts only about forty-five minutes, and even an illegal trip in a makeshift boat (*yola*) across the sixty-mile Mona Channel usually takes between twenty-six and twenty-eight hours, depending on weather conditions and travel routes. Furthermore, the ferry service between San Juan and Santo Domingo (and formerly between Mayagüez and San Pedro de Macorís) provides cheap transportation for passengers, cars, and other heavy items between the two countries. One of the reasons Dominicans often mention for settling in Puerto Rico is that it is much closer to the Dominican Republic than the United States, and many plan to go back home sometime in the future (Romero Anico 1984). Moreover, the Puerto Rican economy continues to demand cheap labor, particularly in the service, construction, and agricultural industries. Compared to the U.S. mainland, the Island provides proportionally more opportunities for low-wage and unskilled employment, especially in the urban informal sector. Culturally, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic have much in common, from similar Caribbean dialects of Spanish, to a shared Catholic heritage, to popular tastes in food, music, and sports. A transnational lifestyle is easier to sustain for Dominicans in Puerto Rico than for those living in the continental United States.

Undocumented migration from the Dominican Republic

Because Puerto Rico is so near to the Dominican Republic, and because it has become more difficult to travel to the United States without government authorization, undocumented migrants are increasingly likely to stay in Puerto Rico rather than move on to the mainland (see Enchautegui 2000). In 1996, U.S. immigration officials estimated that 34,000 undocumented immigrants—mostly from the Dominican Republic—were living in Puerto Rico, compared to 75,000 undocumented Dominicans in the continental United States (*Migration News* 1997; U.S. Department of Justice 1998). According to these figures, the ratio of undocumented to documented Dominicans is almost six times higher in Puerto Rico than in the mainland.

The first recorded illegal trip from the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico took place in 1972, when a small group of Dominicans tried to cross the Mona Passage in an unseaworthy vessel (*yola*). Since the 1980s, the U.S. Coast Guard has intercepted more than 24,400 undocumented Dominicans at sea trying to reach Puerto Rico (see table 3). Moreover, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service in San Juan removed an average of about 3,500 undocumented immigrants every year during the 1990s (U.S. Department of Justice 1991–2000). More than 90 percent of the deportees have come from the Dominican Republic, although other Latin American and Caribbean countries are well represented in the figures, including Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti, and Cuba (Duany, Hernández Angueira, and Rey 1995). The Puerto Rican coastline has become a major entry route into U.S. territory for alien smugglers, after the land frontier with Mexico. This point becomes even more dramatic when one remembers the personal calamities suffered by those who try to cross the Mona Channel. Although no one knows exactly how many *yolas* capsize every year, hundreds of Dominicans have drowned in the perilous sea journey.

TABLE 3
Undocumented Dominicans interdicted at sea by the U.S. Coast Guard, 1982–2004

Year	Number	Year	Number	Year	Number
1982	0	1990	1,426	1998	1,097
1983	6	1991	1,007	1999	583
1984	181	1992	588	2000	499
1985	113	1993	873	2001	659
1986	189	1994	232	2002	177
1987	40	1995	3,388	2003	1,748
1988	254	1996	6,273	2004	3,216
1989	664	1997	1,200	TOTAL	24,413

Source: U.S. Coast Guard □ 2004 □

Several scholars have composed a profile of undocumented migrants from the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico (del Castillo 1989; Duany, Hernández Angueira, and Rey 1995; Hernández and López 1997; Pascual Morán and Figueroa 2000; Selman Fernández, Tavarez María, and Puella Nina 1990). The yolas usually depart from the eastern ports of Higüey, Samaná, Boca de Yuma, and La Romana in the Dominican Republic, and arrive in the western coasts of Puerto Rico, especially Rincón, Añasco, Aguadilla, Aguada, Mayagüez, and Cabo Rojo. The cost of a trip ranged between U.S. \$300 and 1,000 per person in the 1990s. Most of the immigrants are young men with an elementary education and an unskilled job in the Dominican Republic. Others were poor women who worked as domestics, factory workers, or informal traders. Once in Puerto Rico, they tend to move to the San Juan metropolitan area, where relatives and friends help them find work and housing. The majority ends up working in the urban informal sector, especially in itinerant trade, construction, or domestic service. Others attempt to continue their journey to New York City and other places in the U.S. mainland.

The proportion of undocumented immigrants in Puerto Rico seems to vary widely by time and place of settlement. Only 7 percent of those interviewed in the early 1980s said they had entered U.S. territory without authorization, while 35 percent overstayed their tourist visas (Romero Anico 1984). In Barrio Gandul in Santurce, about a third of the Dominican residents were still undocumented in 1990 (Duany, Hernández Angueira, and Rey 1995). In Barrio Capetillo, a heavily Dominican neighborhood in Río Piedras, nearly 59 percent of the interviewees admitted they had arrived in Puerto Rico without legal documents; most had regularized their status by marrying U.S. citizens or permanent residents (Peralta 1995). A similar proportion of undocumented Dominicans were found in the *municipios* of Lares, Maricao, Las Marías, San Sebastián, and Yauco (Pascual Morán and Figueroa 2000). It is difficult to calculate the exact number of unauthorized immigrants for Puerto Rico as a whole, because these field studies have focused on small and statistically unrepresentative samples. One estimate based on census and immigration data suggests that roughly 28 percent of all Dominicans in Puerto Rico in 1996 were undocumented (Enchautegui 2000).

Transnational origins and destinations

REGIONAL ORIGINS

Table 4 compares the migrants' place of birth and last residence in the Dominican Republic, according to our survey of Dominicans in Santurce. Slightly less than half were born in the four largest cities, with about a third in Santo Domingo, the capital. Another third were born in the Cibao region, one of the largest and most prosperous rural areas of the Dominican Republic. However, the proportion of migrants who had lived in Santo Domingo was 12 percent larger than those who were born there. The proportion of those who were born and resided in Santiago, San Pedro de Macorís, and the southeast was about the same. Hence, most Dominicans had urban experience before moving to Puerto Rico, although many were born in rural areas and small cities. Our data show that the Dominican exodus is basically bifurcated between Santo Domingo and the Cibao.

TABLE 4
Region of origin of the Dominican Population in Santurce, Puerto Rico (in percentages)

PLACE	BIRTHPLACE	PREVIOUS RESIDENCE	PLACE	BIRTHPLACE	PREVIOUS RESIDENCE
MAIN CITIES			OTHER AREAS		
Santo Domingo	33.5	45.5	Cibao	31.9	31.8
Santiago	4.2	1.8	Southeast	14.5	10.0
La Romana	4.2	5.5	Southwest	1.3	1.8
S.P. de Macorís	3.2	0.0	Other	7.1	3.6
SUBTOTAL	45.1	52.8	SUBTOTAL	54.8	47.2
			TOTAL	99.9	100.0

Source: Duany □ 1990 □ Note: The percentages in the Birthplace column do not add up to 100 because of rounding.

Even undocumented Dominicans in the Puerto Rican coffee industry have a predominantly urban background (Pascual Morán and Figueroa 2000: 17). However, most Dominicans in Barrio Capetillo come from the eastern provinces of the Dominican Republic, especially the rural zones of Miches (Peralta 1995). These zones are known to send a large number of undocumented Dominicans to Puerto Rico. Such differences suggest that the migrants' regional origins may vary according to their community of settlement; or perhaps they reflect the various sampling frames used by researchers.

SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUND

Recent studies agree that the Dominican diaspora originates primarily amongst the lower middle sectors of Dominican society (Castro and Boswell 2002; Hernández 2002; Levitt 2001; Pessar 1995). Most of the immigrants surveyed in Santurce had been skilled or semiskilled workers in their home country. Almost 43 percent had white-collar jobs, such as sales and administrative occupations, prior to moving abroad. In addition, more than half (58 percent) worked in trade and services, especially personal, business, and repair services. A small proportion (about 11 percent) was employed in agriculture (Duany 1990). These data confirm that Dominican migrants to Puerto Rico are proportionally more skilled than the general population

the Dominican Republic, and that they tend to come from the tertiary sector of the economy. Again, an exception to this trend is the high proportion (nearly 61 percent) who were agricultural workers in the Dominican Republic and who now work as coffee pickers in Puerto Rico (Pascual Morán and Figueroa 2000: 22).

SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

Table 5 shows the residential distribution of Dominicans in Puerto Rico in 2000. Three out of four immigrants live in the San Juan metropolitan area, with secondary concentrations in Caguas, Mayagüez, and Ponce. More than half cluster in the *municipio* of San Juan, while nearly one fifth reside in Carolina and Bayamón. A few hundred Dominicans live in predominantly rural areas such as Yauco, Lares, and Hormigueros. These figures confirm that most Dominicans move to the largest cities of Puerto Rico, especially the capital. This is where the immigrants find most of their employment opportunities.

TABLE 5
Residential distribution of the Dominican-born population of Puerto Rico, 2000

AREA OF RESIDENCE	NUMBER	% OF ALL DOMINICANS	AREA OF RESIDENCE	NUMBER	% OF ALL DOMINICANS
SAN JUAN METRO AREA			OTHER MUNICIPIOS		
San Juan (municipio)	33,860	55.1	Caguas	1,382	2.2
Carolina	6,998	11.4	Ponce	702	1.1
Bayamón	4,440	7.2	Mayagüez	617	1.0
Trujillo Alto	1,295	2.1	Arecibo	538	0.9
Guaynabo	1,288	2.1	Aguadilla	195	0.3
Cataño	443	0.7	Cabo Rojo	168	0.3
SUBTOTAL	48,324	78.6	Yauco	123	0.2
			Lares	114	0.2
			Hormigueros	109	0.2
			Other	9,183	14.9
			SUBTOTAL	13,131	21.4
			TOTAL	61,455	100.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census □2003□

Within San Juan, Dominicans concentrate in the urban centers of Santurce, Río Piedras, and Hato Rey. In Santurce, they live predominantly in low-income neighborhoods such as Barrio Obrero, Calle Loíza, María Moczó, and Herrera (the latter two areas are commonly known as part of Villa Palmeras) (table 6). In Río Piedras and Hato Rey, the immigrants congregate in public housing areas (*caseríos*) such as López Sicardó, Quintana, and San José. The single highest proportion of Dominicans in Puerto Rico (almost 45 percent of all residents) is located in Barrio Capetillo, near the town of Río Piedras. Low rents, central location, accessibility to public transportation, job availability, and the presence of many other compatriots have attracted Dominicans to Santurce and Río Piedras. Here they cluster in deteriorated housing quarters, segregated by class, color, and national origin. Those who live outside Santurce tend to be more skilled, educated, and wealthier than those who live in the main Dominican communities (Romero Anico 1984). For the first time in Puerto Rican history, many Dominican immigrants are living in ghetto-like conditions, in the U.S. sense of extraordinary concentrations of poor ethnic and racial minorities in the inner cities.

TABLE 6
Main areas of residential concentration of the Dominican-born population in San Juan, Puerto Rico, 2000

NEIGHBORHOOD	AREA OF SAN JUAN	NUMBER	PERCENT OF RESIDENTS WHO ARE DOMINICAN
Barrio Obrero	Santurce	3,144	27.6
López Sicardó	Río Piedras	1,196	8.7
Quintana	Hato Rey	1,044	12.0
Capetillo	Río Piedras	995	44.7
San José	Hato Rey	933	4.8
María Moczó	Santurce	846	39.4
Calle Loíza	Santurce	742	34.3
Herrera	Santurce	624	32.7
Gandul	Santurce	598	27.9
Buen Consejo	Río Piedras	595	21.6
Seboruco	Santurce	545	26.7
Las Palmas	Santurce	544	19.4
Las Casas	Santurce	531	7.8
Figueroa	Santurce	511	25.7

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce □2003□

ECONOMIC INCORPORATION

Census data collected between 1970 and 1990 (the most recent occupational data are not yet available by national origin) confirm the presence of two main waves of Dominican immigrants in Puerto Rico. As the Dominican sociologist José del Castillo (1989) has pointed out, a largely middle class and legal wave migrated from the Dominican Republic during the 1960s, whereas a mostly working class and increasingly undocumented flow has occurred since the 1980s. In 1970, Dominican immigrants had a higher proportion of high-status workers, such as managers and professionals, than natives of Puerto Rico (see table 7). An early demographic study even described Dominicans in Puerto Rico as an occupationally “select group,” a “privileged” minority, and “an elite from an educational viewpoint” (Vázquez Calzada and Morales del Valle 1979: 18, 31, 33). This characterization coincides with other socioeconomic portrayals of the Dominican diaspora during the 1960s and 1970s (Funkhouser and Ramos 1993; Grasmuck and Pessar 1991; Pessar 1995).

TABLE 7
Occupational distribution of employed workers born in the Dominican Republic and in Puerto Rico, 1970–1990 (in percentages)

Occupation	1970		1980		1990	
	DR	PR	DR	PR	DR	PR
Managerial and professional	24.3	10.8	12.3	19.5	13.4	19.2
Technical, sales, and administrative support	19.2	24.5	22.0	26.1	23.9	27.9
Precision production, craft, and repair	20.5	15.2	16.7	12.8	13.5	12.0
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	16.2	20.7	14.9	23.0	16.4	21.8
Service	19.2	13.2	33.7	14.9	31.4	15.8
Farming, forestry, and fishing	0.6	8.4	0.4	3.7	1.5	3.3
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100

Sources: for 1970, Vázquez Calzada and Morales del Valle □1979□; for 1980, U.S. Department of Commerce □1984□, for 1990, special tabulations based on the U.S. census by Carlos E. Santiago. Note: The percentages in the sixth column do not add up to 100 because of rounding.

After 1970, the proportion of Dominican service workers increased substantially in Puerto Rico, while the proportion of managers and professionals declined abruptly. In 1990, Dominicans concentrated in the lower rungs of Puerto Rico's labor force. Nearly one-third were unskilled service workers such as domestics, cleaners, and waiters; another third were operators, laborers, and craft workers. Among white-collar workers, only sales and clerical employees represented a sizeable proportion (almost a quarter of the total). Compared to natives of Puerto Rico, Dominican immigrants were more likely to have lower-status jobs such as unskilled workers. In sum, the majority of Dominican immigrants has incorporated into Puerto Rico's secondary labor market, characterized by low wages, poor working conditions, limited opportunities for upward mobility, and job instability.

Table 8 shows that the industrial distribution of Dominican workers in Puerto Rico has remained relatively stable over time. Between 1970 and 1990, three-fifths of the immigrants clustered in services, particularly domestic and other personal services, and trade, especially retail trade. The major changes occurred in manufacturing, which registered an increase in the proportion of Dominican workers between 1970 and 1980, and then a decline between 1980 and 1990; and in construction, which first registered a decline and then an increase during the same period. In Santurce and Río Piedras, the vast majority of Dominicans work in the service sector. Women are predominantly employed in domestic service, while men concentrate in trade, repair services, and construction (Duany 1990; Duany, Hernández Angueira, and Rey 1995; Peralta 1995). In the inner highlands of Puerto Rico, Dominicans are primarily seasonal agricultural workers (Pascual Morán and Figueroa 2000). These patterns of economic incorporation reveal a marked labor market segmentation between Dominicans and Puerto Ricans. They also suggest that most Dominican workers have not displaced Puerto Rican workers, with the possible exception of some types of skilled labor, but instead have come to fill a void in the Island's labor force, specializing in low-wage occupational niches. A similar pattern can be observed among Haitian immigrants in the Dominican Republic.

TABLE 8
Industrial distribution of employed workers born in the Dominican Republic and in Puerto Rico, 1970–1990 (in percentages)

Occupation	1970		1980		1990	
	DR	PR	DR	PR	DR	PR
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and mining	1.2	9.4	0.8	4.8	1.2	3.8
Manufacturing	9.9	20.0	20.5	21.4	11.6	17.3
Construction	16.8	12.2	6.7	8.6	11.0	8.7
Transportation and communications	5.6	8.4	4.3	6.8	4.0	6.2
Trade	30.4	15.9	29.7	16.5	30.3	19.8
Finance, insurance, and real estate	0.6	2.3	3.2	3.1	2.3	3.7
Public administration	2.5	7.9	4.4	12.8	5.2	14.7
Services	33.0	23.9	30.3	26.1	34.4	25.8
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Sources: for 1970, Vázquez Calzada and Morales del Valle 1979; for 1980, U.S. Department of Commerce 1984; for 1990, special tabulations based on the U.S. census by Carlos E. Santiago.

Note: The percentages in the sixth column do not add up to 100 because of rounding.

POLITICAL INCORPORATION

The immigrants' incorporation into Puerto Rican politics has not been well documented, partly because the Island's Electoral Commission does not release breakdowns of voting patterns by national origin. However, Dominican community leaders have begun to participate actively in Puerto Rican political campaigns, supporting both pro-Commonwealth and pro-statehood candidates for governor in the last elections (Iturrondo 2000). In 2000, a Dominican woman, Claribel Martínez-Marmolejos, was elected to the San Juan municipal legislature, but not as a spokesperson for the Dominican community. In a recent election held to replace a local representative, the Dominican candidate Pedro Ruiz obtained only 10.7 percent of the votes in San Juan (Rosario 2003). Unlike Dominicans in New York, Dominicans in San Juan are not well represented in municipal and state assemblies.

At this point, the ideological preferences of Dominicans in Puerto Rico seem divided. Until recently, the immigrants were primarily concerned with the politics of their homeland rather than with their host society. Accordingly, they were basically organized around the three major political parties of the Dominican Republic (the PRD, the PLD, and the PRSC), not those of Puerto Rico. In any case, most have not become U.S. citizens and therefore cannot vote in local elections, referenda, or plebiscites. Between 1972 and 2002, only 12,465 Dominicans were naturalized in San Juan (table 9). This figure represents 10.5 percent of all Dominicans admitted to the Island since 1966. The recent constitutional amendment allowing for dual citizenship in the Dominican Republic may soon increase the naturalization rate of Dominicans in Puerto Rico as well as in the continental United States. It remains unclear when Dominicans will have a decisive impact on municipal politics, especially in San Juan.

TABLE 9
Dominicans naturalized as U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico, 1972–2002

YEAR	NUMBER	YEAR	NUMBER	YEAR	NUMBER	YEAR	NUMBER
1972	.....123	1980	.....332	1988	.....710	1996	.....0
1973	.....142	1981	.....502	1989	.....512	1997	.....223
1974	.....177	1982	.....404	1990	.....6	1998	.....952
1975	.....125	1983	.....211	1991	.....512	1999	.....1,373
1976	.....176	1984	.....231	1992	.....1,208	2000	.....305
1977	.....256	1985	.....305	1993	.....1,116	2001	.....301
1978	.....232	1986	.....228	1994	.....829	2002	.....527
1979	.....255	1987	.....100	1995	.....2	TOTAL	.....12,465

Source: U.S. Department of Justice 1973–2003. Note: The Immigration and Naturalization Service did not collect separate data for Dominicans naturalized in Puerto Rico before 1972.

Transnational practices

POLITICAL PARTIES

The primary form of organization for Dominicans in Puerto Rico is the political party. As mentioned before, the leading Dominican parties have been active in San Juan for decades. All have been important fund-raising venues for presidential candidates in the Dominican Republic. In turn, the Dominican consulates in San Juan, Mayagüez, and Ponce have become symbolic prizes for immigrant leaders affiliated with the ruling party. A recent study of these leaders documents their extensive activities, community bases, and strong links to the Dominican power

structure (Iturrondo 2000). Dominican parties operating in Puerto Rico as well as in the U.S. mainland provide the best example of Dominican political transnationalism (Graham 2001; Itzigsohn, Dore Cabral, Hernández Medina, and Vázquez 1999; Levitt 2001). However, they have promoted the immigrants' reincorporation in the Dominican Republic more than their participation in Puerto Rican politics.

HOMETOWN ASSOCIATIONS

A second type of transnational organization that has attracted much scholarly interest is the hometown club—a social or cultural association based on its members' regional origins. For instance, immigrants from Cotuí, Jarabacoa, La Romana, La Vega, and Puerto Plata have formed their own groups in Puerto Rico (table 10). These clubs usually organize trips back home, donate medical supplies to their compatriots, and promote the celebration of special occasions such as Carnival festivities. But most are highly informal organizations centered around strong leaders and their personal cliques. The Puerto Rican sociologist, Milagros Iturrondo, provides a gloomy assessment of these voluntary associations:

Some organizations are created with the goal of institutionalizing themselves as entities at the service of their community. The goal is often lost, however, when the leadership faces a power struggle. We also observe a pattern in which organizations usually end up disintegrating themselves when the leadership does not consult its base in decision-making processes. The panorama is one of multiple atomized organizations that appear and disappear, even after being legally registered (2000: 85; my translation).

RELIGIOUS GROUPS

So far, researchers have identified only one voluntary association with an explicit religious focus among Dominicans in Puerto Rico. The Asociación 21 de enero, founded in Río Piedras in 1980, is a Catholic organization devoted to the Virgin of Altgracia, the patron of the Dominican Republic. With only eighteen members, this group sponsors religious and charitable activities, such as rosaries, pilgrimages, masses, and donations. However, according to the Dominican planner Reyna Peralta (1995), it constitutes a very small, closed, and informal group with few connections to the Dominican community of Barrio Capetillo. Iturrondo (2000) mentions a few other Dominican associations loosely centered around the cult of the Virgin in Santurce and Río Piedras. In addition, Dominicans are active in several Protestant congregations, such as the Adventist, Baptist, Episcopalian, Lutheran, and Pentecostal denominations. A homegrown church, the Iglesia de Mita, has even expanded into the Dominican Republic and other Latin American countries. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Dominicans have also contributed to the growth of *gagú* (a Dominican-Haitian cult), *santería* (an Afro-Cuban religion), and *espiritismo* (spiritualism) in Puerto Rico. Unfortunately, the transnational linkages of these religious organizations with the Dominican Republic have not been studied to date.

SOCIAL CLUBS

According to anthropologist Eugenia Georges (1984: 22–23), Dominican social clubs in New York “have as their overtly stated objective to bring members together for informal socializing, as well as more formally organized activities such as competitive sports, raffles, dances, lectures, and so on.” Dominicans have established several recreational associations in Puerto Rico, such as La Casa

TABLE 10
Main Dominican organizations in Puerto Rico, ca. 2000

ORGANIZATION	YEAR FOUNDED	MAIN LOCATION	CURRENT REPRESENTATIVE
POLITICAL PARTIES			
Social Christian Reformist Party (PRSC)	1963	Santurce	Martín Taveras Guzmán
Dominican Liberation Party (PLD)	1973	Río Piedras	Ismael Luna
Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD)	1966	Santurce	Rolando Acosta
HOMETOWN ASSOCIATIONS			
Amigos de Cotuí	?	Santurce	Cristina Salas de Saviñón
Amigos de Jarabacoa	?	?	Generoso Hernández
Asociación de Veganos	1996	Santurce	Frank Capellán
Asociación Hijos y Amigos de Puerto Plata	1994	?	Rosa Torréns
Asociación Hijos y Amigos de La Romana	?	?	Luis Antonio Island Eusebio
RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATION			
Asociación 21 de enero	1980	Río Piedras	Reynaldo Cruz
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CLUBS			
Asociación Cultural Antillana	?	?	?
Centro Cultural Dominicano	?	Santurce	?
Casa Dominicana del Oeste	1977	Mayagüez	Paulina Concepción
Club Cultural Dominicanos Unidos	1973	Santurce	Fernando Rodríguez
Comunidad de Confraternidad Dominicana	1992	Trujillo Alto	Francisco Cabrera
Fraternidad de Dominicanos Radicados en Puerto Rico	?	Cayey	?
CIVIC AND PROFESSIONAL GROUPS			
Asociación de Ingenieros, Arquitectos y Agrimensores Dominicanos Residentes de Puerto Rico	1980	?	José Acevedo Alfam
Asociación de Investigadores y Profesores Universitarios Dominicanos en Puerto Rico	1986	Río Piedras	César Lozano
Asociación de Periodistas Dominicanos en Puerto Rico	1985	?	Héctor Julio Hernández
Asociación de Sastres y Modistas en Puerto Rico	1980	?	Miguel de la Cruz
Centro de la Mujer Dominicana	2003	Río Piedras	Romelinda Grullón
Círculo Dominicano de Locutores	?	?	?
Comité Pro Mejor Imagen Dominicanos	?	?	José Germán Gómez
Concilio de Organizaciones Dominicanas en Puerto Rico	1992	?	?
Dominicanos 2000	1994	?	Elvin Santana
Federación de Comerciantes y Empresarios Dominicanos	?	Santurce	Pablo Puello
Fundación Domínico Puertorriqueña	1993	?	Héctor Julio Hernández
Movimiento de Orientación al Emigrante	?	Santurce	Rodolfo de la Cruz
Movimiento de Unidad Obrera Dominicana	?	?	Saúl Pérez
Unión Internacional de Dominicanos Inmigrantes	?	?	Felipe Brazobán Fortunato

Source: Adapted from Iturrondo 2000.

Dominicana del Oeste in Mayagüez and smaller social clubs in Santurce (see table 10). La Casa Dominicana was founded in 1977 under the logo “Unity, peace, and harmony” and is intended to foster “the healthy recreation and improvement of our cultural heritage within the framework of fraternal links with the Puerto Rican people” (*Hablando de Quisqueya en Borinquen* 1992). With more than 500 members, the club traditionally celebrates a family day in honor of all mothers in the western region of Puerto Rico. Other regular activities include sponsoring a softball team, a domino tournament, and a series of public lectures. Unfortunately, La Casa Dominicana lacks a locale to build its own physical structure. A similar initiative in San Juan has faced the same financial problem.

OTHER VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS

The largest number of Dominican organizations in Puerto Rico includes a wide variety of professional and occupational groups (table 10). For instance, some voluntary associations have represented the entrepreneurial, commercial, and academic sectors of the immigrant community, while others have targeted engineers, journalists, radio announcers, tailors, and workers. Until now, efforts to create umbrella organizations for the entire Dominican community, such as the Concilio de Organizaciones Dominicanas and the Unión Internacional de Dominicanos Inmigrantes, have been largely ineffective. Dominican associations are fewer, weaker, and less integrated than in New York, which boasted around 125 such groups in the 1980s (Georges 1984). Although more than forty Dominican organizations have been registered in Puerto Rico (José Germán Gómez, personal communication, March 16, 1995), most are small, fragmented, and unable to articulate a unified voice.

A formerly active member of the Dominican community in Puerto Rico, now living in New York, has identified four of its main organizational problems (Gómez 1993). To begin, the reproduction of Dominican institutions—especially political parties, labor unions, and newspapers—continues to divide the immigrants in the host country. Second, the apparent lack of interest on the part of Dominicans in integrating into Puerto Rican society increases their social and political marginality. Third, the constant movement of people among the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and the United States contributes to the lack of permanence of community leaders and followers. Finally, discrimination against Dominicans in Puerto Rico militates against the creation of representative and well-integrated organizations that struggle for their civil rights.

GENDER DIFFERENCES

Several essays, theses, and films have focused on the plight of Dominican women in Puerto Rico (Casal 1992; de la Rosa Abreu 2002; Fritz 1990; Hernández and López 1997; Hernández Angueira 1990, 1997). Our survey of Dominicans in Santurce found that three out of five immigrants were women (Duany 1990). The predominantly female character of the Dominican exodus is primarily a function of the increasing demand for cheap labor in Puerto Rico, particularly in domestic service, home care, restaurants, and cafeterias. Most Dominican women are relatively young, between twenty and forty years of age, single or divorced, with an average of eight years of schooling and prior experience in domestic service before migrating. Many leave their immediate family in the Dominican Republic because of the high risk of traveling (often illegally) and the cost of living in Puerto Rico. Women are often the first members of their households to move abroad, initiating a long chain migration over time as other relatives later join them in Santurce. Once settled there, many women

legalize their status and eventually “ask for” their sons and daughters, who remain back home under the care of grandparents, uncles and aunts, and other close kin.

For many Dominican women, the migration experience represents a significant rupture in their traditional family structure. In our sample, Dominican women headed 56 percent of all households, with or without husbands present. Barely half of all Dominican households were nuclear families; the rest were extended families or single-person households (Duany 1990). In many cases, husbands and children were temporarily separated from their wives and mothers as a result of migration. Thus, migration is often the cause or the effect of marital disruption and divorce. Such shifts in gender and family roles are primarily due to women’s incorporation into the paid labor force, as well as changing fertility patterns, and frequently lead to more egalitarian relations between men and women within the household. As a result, men are more likely than women to plan to return to the Dominican Republic, where they can reestablish traditional male authority patterns. Dominican women in Puerto Rico as well as in the continental United States tend to postpone going back home, because they feel they might lose their more autonomous position as wives, mothers, and workers (see Grasmuck and Pessar 1991; Guarnizo 1995; Pessar 1995). Many Dominican women recognize that Dominican men are *machistas* who believe they have the right to control women, and resist their subordination to male domination (Hernández and López 1997; Ricourt 2002).

THE PROBLEM OF RACIAL IDENTITY

Elsewhere I have documented the difficulties faced by most Dominicans in Puerto Rico on account of their skin color (Duany 1998). The main problem is that the vast majority of Dominicans consider themselves *indios* (literally “Indians,” figuratively brown-skinned), whereas most Puerto Ricans classify them as black or mulatto. Several authors have pointed out that Puerto Ricans tend to represent Dominicans as darker-skinned than themselves, underline their Negroid facial features and hair texture, and treat them accordingly (Cruz Caraballo 1998; López Carrasquillo 1999; Martínez-San Miguel 2003). This contradiction between the immigrants’ public perception and self-concept is one of their key impediments to full integration into Puerto Rican society. Hence, Dominicans often experience the intense stigmatization, stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and exclusion to which all people of African origin are subjected in Puerto Rico and other countries. The racialization of Dominican immigrants permeates their incorporation into Puerto Rican society—from finding jobs and housing to schooling and marriage patterns, even in the second generation. In all these areas, the coupling of *dominicano* with *negro* makes it more difficult for immigrants to be accepted by the host country.

Ethnic humor is a case in point. Like other disadvantaged minorities, Dominicans in Puerto Rico are the main targets of an extensive repertoire of ethnic jokes, racial slurs, anecdotes, and quips. (Iturrondo [1993–1994] has collected and analyzed a sample of more than 1,000 Dominican jokes.) Numerous studies have documented an increasingly hostile public image of Dominican immigrants on the Island during the 1980s and 1990s (Benítez Nazario 2001; De Maeseneer 2002; Martínez-San Miguel 2003; Mejía Pardo 1993; Ríos 1992; Romero Anico 1984). Popular radio and television programs in Puerto Rico have tended to ridicule Dominicans as comic, ignorant, vulgar, and unruly characters, such as the TV domestic Altagracia in *Entrando por la cocina* (de la Rosa Abreu 2002). Graffiti calling for “Death to Dominicans” has occasionally appeared in public murals in San Juan, and anonymous leaflets denouncing “The Dominican Plague” have been distributed in academic conferences.

Puerto Rican folklore often portrays Dominicans as strange, incomprehensible, dangerous, dumb, inept, dirty, undesirable, illegitimate, and dishonest subjects. In countless jokes, riddles, and stories, Dominican immigrants appear as objects of scorn and rejection, primarily because of their foreign accent, physical features, cultural idiosyncrasy, and illegal status. Ironically, the dominant discourse on Dominicans in Puerto Rico resembles that on Haitians in the Dominican Republic or, for that matter, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans in the United States.

Pending questions

CULTURAL IDENTITY

Since the mid-1980s, most studies of Dominican immigrants in Puerto Rico have focused on their incorporation into the labor market, dwelling on their socio-economic origins and impacts on the local economy. Fewer studies have examined the transnational cultural practices of Dominicans in Puerto Rico, such as their language, literature, religion, music, or food. Literary critic Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel (2003) has analyzed the narratives and other cultural representations (such as songs, films, paintings, and graffiti) of the Dominican diaspora in Puerto Rico and the United States (see also De Maeseneer 2002). She has concluded that migration reconfigures the dominant discourses of national identity in the Dominican Republic and the Hispanic Caribbean. For example, some Dominican writers and artists have expanded their traditional notion of national culture to include the massive displacements of the Dominican population to the United States, Puerto Rico, and other countries. However, more ethnographic fieldwork is needed to specify the changes in popular culture as a consequence of transnational migration between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico.

THE SECOND GENERATION

To date, research on Dominicans in Puerto Rico has concentrated on first-generation immigrants—that is, those born in the Dominican Republic. However, a growing number of persons of Dominican origin were born in Puerto Rico, and many have both Dominican and Puerto Rican ancestry. In 1990, as many as 5,558 persons born in Puerto Rico had both Dominican parents and 13,944 had one Dominican parent (U.S. Department of Commerce 1993: Tables 4, 6). These figures suggest a high rate of intermarriage between Dominicans and Puerto Ricans, as well as the rise of a second generation of Dominicans in Puerto Rico. However, the cultural dilemmas of younger Dominicans have only begun to be appreciated, and then only in the context of the public schools of San Juan (Cruz Caraballo 1998; López Carrasquillo 1999). An important empirical question is to what extent transnational ties, ideas, and practices persist beyond the first generation. As Puerto Ricans of Dominican ancestry lose their foreign accents, acquire U.S. citizenship, and marry non-Dominicans, do they continue to identify with their parents' homeland or do they shift their allegiances to the host society?

TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Transnationalism is largely predicated on formal and informal connections between sending and receiving countries. As noted before, the Dominican community in San Juan is not as well organized as in New York, except for the major political parties from the Dominican Republic. Even a recent attempt to establish a Puerto Rican subsidiary of the Centro para el Desarrollo de la Mujer Dominicana, based in New York, was unsuccessful. (A Dominican women's center was established in Río

Piedras in March 2003, but without official links to the New York organization.) Does this mean that transnational forms of organizing are less effective among Dominicans in Puerto Rico than in the continental United States? If so, how can community leaders strengthen their capacity to represent the immigrant population vis-à-vis the host as well as sending societies? What are the costs and benefits of promoting transnational grassroots organizations among the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and the United States?

IMPACT ON PUBLIC SERVICES

Very little research has been conducted on Dominicans' use of government services in Puerto Rico, although much public apprehension about Dominican immigration on the Island hinges on these topics. A recent report by Puerto Rico's Education Department found 3,581 Dominican-born students in the Island's public schools, mostly in San Juan (Cámara de Diputados 2002: 55). In some schools in Santurce, more than 28 percent of the students are Dominican (Cruz Caraballo 1998). The increasing presence of Dominican students (as well as the children of return migrants from the U.S. mainland) poses a great challenge to the Puerto Rican educational system. Among other things, it raises the issue of cultural diversity within the Island's population and suggests the need to update the curriculum, textbook materials, teaching and counseling strategies, and extracurricular activities. Under the former Secretary of Education, sociologist César A. Rey, who has collaborated with our research on Dominican immigrants, the Department of Education has begun to incorporate the topic into public school activities. However, no official statement on educational policy toward the immigrants has been made. Unfortunately, Dominicans are routinely scapegoated for their supposed abuse of government services. Future researchers should look closely at the immigrants' reliance on the public health system, including their folk medical beliefs and practices; their public housing patterns; and their degree of welfare dependence in Puerto Rico.

REMITTANCES

One aspect of the transnational ties forged by Dominican migrants that has received increasing attention in academic and policymaking circles is the money they send back home. Several studies conducted in Puerto Rico have found that Dominicans devote a large share of their income to maintain their families in the Dominican Republic. In the 1980s and 1990s, most Dominicans sent between U.S. \$50 and \$150 per month, a considerable amount of money given their low wages and the high cost of living in Puerto Rico (Duany 1990; Pascual Morán and Figueroa 2000). The average amount of money per migrant has probably increased over the last decade.

In 2003, it was estimated that Dominicans in Puerto Rico sent about U.S. \$540 million to the Dominican Republic—20 percent of all remittances to that country (*The San Juan Star* 2004). One enterprising photographer, Vinicio Peña, has established forty remittance agencies throughout Puerto Rico (Iturrondo 2000: 392). Dozens of other local companies specialize in *envío de valores* ("sending of valuables," including money, packages, and gifts), such as Consorcio Oriental, El Rapidito Express, Envíos Mi Tierra, Fernández Ventura y Asociado, Rafael Express, and Remesas Quisqueyanas. Most of these agencies are located near the main Dominican concentrations in Santurce and Río Piedras. Even financial

giants such as Western Union and Banco Popular have recently tapped into the vast money-sending business to the Dominican Republic. This type of transnational economic linkage needs further study in order to quantify its impact on both the sending and receiving countries.

ETHNIC BUSINESSES

Finally, very little is known about the entrepreneurial activities of Dominicans in Puerto Rico. According to the 1990 Census, they have a much higher self-employment rate (16.8 percent) than natives of Puerto Rico (9.5 percent) (Rivera Román 2004). (These figures include people who work on their own as well as business owners.) Yet no one has studied systematically the proliferation of small businesses owned by Dominicans in San Juan, particularly in retail trade and services.

A valuable source of information on this topic is the *Guía de dominicanos en Puerto Rico* (Jiménez 1989), which lists dozens of Dominican enterprises. Among them, the most prominent are those specializing in the provision of ethnic food, such as grocery stores, supermarkets, bakeries, and butcher shops; ethnic services, such as restaurants, cafeterias, bars, discotheques, and beauty parlors; professional services, such as legal, counseling, and accounting firms; transnational mediation, such as travel agencies, moving companies, telephone services, and above all remittance agencies; and an assortment of other services oriented toward the general population, including auto repair shops, car dealers, printing shops, construction companies, and medical offices. This brief inventory suggests that Dominicans have contributed substantially to creating jobs, accumulating capital, employing other immigrants, and expanding markets in Puerto Rico. This impression should be corroborated by more careful research on Dominican businesses on the Island.

Conclusion

The experience of Dominican immigrants in Puerto Rico can be analyzed productively from a transnational perspective. For centuries, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico have been bound together by geography, history, culture, language, and religion. Before 1930, thousands of Puerto Ricans went to work in the Dominican Republic, primarily in the sugar mills of San Pedro de Macorís, Puerto Plata, and La Romana. Since 1960, tens of thousands of Dominicans have sought a better life in Puerto Rico, usually taking over low-wage service jobs in the San Juan metropolitan area. Over the last few decades, social, economic, and political ties between the two countries have intensified through large-scale migration, tourism, trade, and investment. The continuing tide of undocumented migrants is a dramatic expression of those ties, despite increasing efforts by U.S. and Dominican authorities to curb the illegal traffic of people.

Dominicans have established vibrant transnational communities in San Juan, especially in the urban centers of Santurce and Río Piedras. These communities function very much like “transnational villages” in Peggy Levitt’s sense of places tied across borders through continuous flows of people, money, ideas, practices, organizations, and resources (Levitt 2001). Migrants from the same origins in the Cibao, Miches, or Santo Domingo often resettle in predominantly working-class neighborhoods of San Juan, such as Barrio Obrero and Barrio Capetillo. The vast majority of the immigrants are employed as unskilled service and blue-collar workers such as domestics, cleaners, waitresses, security guards, and construction workers. By and large, Dominicans have incorporated into the secondary segment of the Puerto Rican labor market. Despite

their growing numbers, they have not attained a proportionate degree of political empowerment, partly because most are either undocumented or have not become U.S. citizens. Economically and politically, the Dominican population is still marginal to Puerto Rican society, but not to Dominican society. Increasing reliance on remittances is the clearest sign of the migrants’ continuing presence back home.

Transnational ideas and practices characterize much of the daily life of Dominicans in Puerto Rico. The three major political parties from the Dominican Republic continue to attract large followings among the immigrants, dividing their ideological loyalties and fragmenting their sense of community. Class, regional, gender, racial, and legal differences contribute to the further splintering of Dominican associations, both formal and informal. Nonetheless, many Dominicans have managed to reconstruct their cultural identity in a transnational context. The growing Dominican presence in Santurce and Río Piedras has visibly transformed the physical and cultural landscape of several neighborhoods, which now vie for the title of “Little Santo Domingo” or “Little Quisqueya.” The Dominican influence in Puerto Rico is most evident in popular language, music, religion, and food preferences, although these should be studied in more detail. The immigrants have also made recent inroads into the local mass media—in radio, television, and the press—that help them to preserve their social and cultural ties to the Dominican Republic.

In short, Dominicans in Puerto Rico are key players in the construction of a dense transnational field among the Dominican Republic, the United States, and other countries. Among other things, they represent a significant proportion of the multimillion-dollar remittance market, as well as investments for small businesses, construction, and tourism in the Dominican Republic. They regularly raise large amounts of funds for Dominican presidential candidates at the same time that they have begun to participate in Puerto Rican elections. They travel frequently between San Juan and Santo Domingo, especially during Christmas vacations and other ritual occasions, carrying gifts, letters, cassettes, and bags full of merchandise to be resold back home. They constantly circulate capital, goods, and information, as well as values, images, and identities, between their home and host countries. In sum, Dominicans in Puerto Rico have contributed substantially to redraw the symbolic contours of their nation-state through a wide variety of transnational practices.



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NOTE

¹ Based on a sample of the 1980 census, Funkhouser and Ramos (1993) found that Dominican immigrants in Puerto Rico were more educated, skilled, and professional than those on the U.S. mainland. However, the 1990 census showed that Dominican immigrants in Puerto Rico had a larger proportion of service, precision production, craft, and repair workers than in New York City (Hernández 2002; Rivera Román 2004). Moreover, the census is known to underestimate undocumented immigrants, who tend to be less skilled and educated than legal residents.

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