CITY AND ISLAND: DOMINICANS IN LAWRENCE

transnational community formation
in a globalizing world

by

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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

As an exploration of the Dominican immigrant community in Lawrence, Massachusetts, this thesis seeks to understand how the continuing motives for migration, as well as the barriers and opportunities facing Dominicans in Lawrence, depend on a complex intersection of political, economic, cultural, and social forces linking the Dominican Republic and the City. Historic economic and political ties create strong objective and cultural-ideological links between the Island and the United States and give rise to a set of transnational practices through which immigrants maintain ties to their homeland. The history of the City also intersects with a restructuring of the regional and global economy to shape the nature of immigrant incorporation into local labor markets and political and social structures. Dominicans in Lawrence negotiate through these structures by engaging in a broad variety of both transnational and creole practices—involving ties to the Island and cultural adaptations in the City—that in many ways represent a continuity with previous immigrant strategies. Political and economic advancement for Dominicans in the City is complicated by the interaction between objective difficulties, such as the language barrier and persistent racism, and more subjective frameworks such as the American Dream and the dream of returning to the Island. Community development efforts aimed at overcoming these complications should build on the family and social networks of the community and make use of the creative transnational ties that Dominicans in the City have forged.
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We become ourselves through our relationships with others. Thus, I owe a staggering debt of gratitude to a great many people who have loved, sustained, supported, informed, educated, and challenged me during the writing of this document. The words below are a small attempt towards repayment.

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The numerous imperfections of this document are the sole responsibility of the author.
You may grow up in the country, move to the city to make your fortune and find a mate, then move back to the country… In doing so, you are no more unnatural than a salmon who swims upstream to spawn… Some would say that all this moving about keeps people from forming a deep attachment to any one place… Often, though, a place finds its staunchest champions and acutest students in people who come from—or end up—someplace else… No people on earth has sprung from the soil of its place… No culture is pure. All are products of history, of migration, of hybridization… in any practicable future the planet and its peoples will stay enmeshed in a net of cause and effect. We will have to find a way to feel responsible not only for the places we pass through, but for the places we never come near that are nonetheless touched by our actions… the flocks of refugees that flutter against our shores are often nothing more than our own political, economic, and ecological fecklessness coming home to roost… [what we need is] a love of particular places—not one but several—and at least a vague sense of how they figure among the many different places needed to make a functioning world. And this in turn is possible only for those who travel, migrate, move back and forth between city and country, or otherwise get around. (Eisenberg, 1998:394-5)

In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/ genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.

(Anderson, 1983:6)
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SOME INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

This thesis has grown (mushroomed, some might say) out of my myriad experiences working in Lawrence, Massachusetts—a city of some 70,000 inhabitants, located less than 30 miles north of Boston, straddling the banks of the Merrimack River. Lawrence exerts a peculiar fascination on students of urban planning. It was, after all, one of the most planned cities ever built in New England: a model mill town, carved out of the surrounding municipalities of Andover and Methuen in 1847 by Yankee entrepreneurs eager to build the world’s next great industrial city. In fact, Lawrence was conceived of by its founders as an improvement over the pioneering mill city of Lowell—more compact, more efficient, more streamlined. In its heyday, some of the longest mills in the world lined the river banks, using the water power of the “mighty Merrimack” and the labor of generations of immigrants\(^1\) to produce cotton and wool cloth for people around the globe. Enormous clock and bell towers, which still top many of the remaining mill buildings, called workers to the mills in the mornings and released them to company boardinghouses at night. The clattering, humming spinners and looms that turned raw fiber into thread and wove thread into cloth within the mills were a microcosm of Lawrence itself: the City as Machine.

I began to work in Lawrence—known as the Immigrant City—in February of 1998, undertaking an economic analysis of the City with five other students through an Economic Development Planning and Policy course. Subsequently, I held a summer internship in the City’s Office of Economic Development, working to further some of the recommendations for economic development our group had made. This work continued into the fall of 1998, as I completed (with four other students) a small and minority business development study, concentrating on gaps in technical assistance services in the City. At the same time, I became involved in an ongoing community organizing and neighborhood planning effort in the North Common neighborhood of the City, working with a local community development corporation, a neighborhood association, and a community planning consultant. In the course of my work, I soon became vividly aware of Lawrence as a largely Latino city, indelibly marked by the vital Dominican and Puerto Rican communities that make up a substantial share of its population.\(^2\)

This growing understanding of the City has helped me to realize the deep, multidimensional significance of the nickname “Immigrant City.” Although a small city, Lawrence is and has always been a focal point and destination for new arrivals to the United States. In fact, with the exception of the period from about 1920 to 1965 (a period of highly restrictive U.S. immigration laws), the City experienced an almost continuous influx of immigrants from various parts of the world, such that the foreign-born population usually constituted between 40% and 50% of inhabitants\(^3\). Thus, like many other cities, Lawrence is the often hotly contested site of a whole

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\(^1\) While many of the first mill workers were Yankee farm girls and boys recruited from all over New England, Lawrence attracted immigrants (specifically Irish fleeing the 1846 potato famine) from its inception—and segregation in housing “was practiced at the very beginning as the natives took the best parts of town.” (Cole, 1963, pp.24-6).

\(^2\) The 1990 Census puts the Latino population (which includes Cubans, as well as Ecuadorians, Peruvians, and other South Americans) at 43% of the total. Subsequent MIRROR Population Projections have put the 1998 proportion as high as 70%. Current Population Survey data indicates a proportion of 50% (Dr. R. Hernandez, UMass Boston).

\(^3\) Cole 1963; Borges-Mendez, 1992. After 1960, the first new “immigrants” to the City were mainly Puerto Rican; thus it would be more accurate to characterize the City from 1960-1980 as having a growing “minority” population, as Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens. Subsequent Latino immigration has increased the proportion of foreign-born.
set of questions and anxieties regarding both urban and American identity and culture—
constructs which are rarely static (although often invoked as such), but continually evolving.
Moreover, an awareness of Lawrence’s role as both an immigrant city and an industrial city
provides considerable insight into some of the intimate linkages that exist between immigration
and industrial development—or deindustrialization, as the case may be. Inevitably, an
exploration of these questions and linkages leads us both outside the arbitrary physical
boundaries of the city, and back inside those not-so-arbitrary boundaries.

Like all cities, Lawrence is in a constant state of flux. It is constituted by a complicated series of
flows and interconnections—of people, of goods, of information, of money, of ideas—with the
larger world. The City is a primary destination for many of the new immigrants, in particular a
growing stream of people from the Dominican Republic. In the face of the severe economic
reversal of fortune the City has experienced, at times hemorrhaging business and industry during
the past thirty years, its continued attraction for these new residents presents a puzzle.

Like all cities, Lawrence is also particular and discrete—in its history, its architecture, its people,
in what triggers the choices that diverse people make to get there or stay or leave. Both the
particularity and the interconnectedness of the City are at the heart of the following questions:

- Why and how did the Dominican migration to the City start, particularly in the face of high
  unemployment and job loss in sectors that traditionally employ immigrants? If large-scale
economic changes (often referred to as globalization) are sending all “our” jobs to
developing nations, why are so many of “their” residents emigrating here?
- In this larger context of immigration and change, what is the character of Dominican and
  Dominican-American life in the City? A former employee of the City’s Community
Development Department once told me, “You can’t understand Lawrence without
understanding the connection between the City and the Dominican Republic.” What is the
nature of this connection?

An exploration of the Dominican community in the City affords an excellent opportunity to
examine some of the ways in which global economic restructuring (a fancy term that will
hopefully be clarified later) and immigration flows intersect within a particular context. This in
turn will help us draw out some of both the continuities and discontinuities in immigration
patterns—motivations, demographics, settlement patterns, and modes of adaptation—that
characterize the Dominican influx to Lawrence. While “immigration” is an almost universally
recognized force in shaping the development of the United States, it remains a catch-all phrase
that covers a wide variety of causes and effects, changing economic and social patterns, and
ambivalent relationships between older and more recent urban inhabitants. Much recent research
in this area has focused on the phenomenon of transnationalism (another term awaiting later
clarification) in explaining the migration and adaptation patterns of “new” immigrants. Without a
richer understanding of the motivating factors driving particular groups to particular places, of
the culture, perspective, and characteristics of these groups, and of their unique experiences and
ways of living in their receiving communities, I believe that planners will be ill-equipped to deal
with the profound challenges and possibilities that immigrants bring to cities.

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4 Refers to people migrating from the Caribbean, Latin America, and Southeast Asia.
5 Personal communication, Kim Stevenson, August 1998.
What I Did and How I Did It

Naturally, the questions I’ve outlined above represent a huge inquiry—one that several people suggested would be better suited to a dissertation than a master’s thesis (and I absolve them of all responsibility for my folly). Inevitably, I am compelled to state at the beginning that my efforts are necessarily incomplete. I am plagued by this incompleteness—I go to sleep every night dreaming of the people and groups in Lawrence that I have not yet interviewed or contacted and the books I have not read and the data sets I have not analyzed. I am also haunted by the paltry thanks this incomplete work presents to the diverse members of the Dominican community who gave so generously of their time and insight to help me with this project. Their words form the best part of what lies within these pages.

This thesis has been informed by an intensive literature review that was focused on deepening my understanding of Dominican immigrant communities in the United States, the nature of the interaction between globalization and immigration, the history and culture of the Dominican Republic, the economic and political ties between the Dominican Republic and the United States, the history of Lawrence, and the phenomenon of transnationalism.

In addition to this literature review, I conducted 40 interviews, conversations, or discussions with people either living or working in Lawrence or knowledgeable about this subject. I use the term “interview” to connote a personal, in-depth interaction in which someone conveyed to me considerable elements of their personal history and experiences. A “conversation” was a briefer, more informal interaction (15-30 minutes, covering one or two topics). A discussion was an in-depth interaction without the personal element. A particularly rewarding part of my outreach into the community for interviewees was the two presentations I made on the local Spanish-language radio station, WHAV 1490 AM. These radio gigs took place on February 27 and March 6, 1999, from 8:30 to 9 am, on the show Sabado Espectacular, hosted by Rafael Jacobo. My 40 interactions included:

- 25 in-depth interviews with members of the City’s Dominican community, varying in length from 45 minutes to four hours. I interviewed 14 men and 11 women, ranging in age from early 20s to late 60s. 13 interviews were conducted in Spanish and 12 in English. 12 interviews were taped in their entirety and professionally transcribed; during the others I took notes. Three of the 25 people I interviewed twice, and counted it as one extended interview. Interview candidates were selected in the following highly unscientific ways:
  - 8 were local business people or community leaders (these categories sometimes overlap), most of whom were known to me through my work in the City.
  - 2 people were family members of this first group.
  - 2 people were residents of the neighborhood in which I work.
  - 8 people were chosen from the callers to the radio show. They gave me their names and numbers (off air) and I later met them in the Lawrence Public Library for a full interview.
  - 2 people were members of the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (Dominican Revolutionary Party) whom I met at the party’s headquarters in North Lawrence.
  - 2 were young adults working in two of the City’s non-profit agencies.
  - 1 was a client of the Department of Transitional Assistance whom I met in their lobby.
• 3 discussions with academics or administrators at UMass Boston, Northern Essex Community College, and Wellesley College familiar with the City or the field.
• 3 conversations with staff or owners of local temporary agencies.
• 3 conversations with Dominican workers using one of these employment agencies.
• 3 conversations with an administrator and case workers at the Department of Transitional Assistance.
• 3 discussions with local non-profit staff working with the Dominican community.

It should be noted up front that the sample of my in-depth interviews is not representative of the entire Dominican community in the City. While my interviewees had spent anywhere from 10 months to 30 years in the City, most of them had been in the City (or the United States) for at least 10 years. However, I would say that the major shortcoming in my interview sample concerns the issue of class. The vast majority of my interviewees either had some college education or professional background in the Dominican Republic or the United States, had been members of the urban middle class in the Dominican Republic, or belonged to the more successful, established echelon of the Lawrence Dominican community. As a substantial number of Dominicans in the City come from rural areas of the Cibao valley in the north of the Republic, and as a rule have considerably less education than most of the members of my sample, this is a major gap in my research.

All of the extended interviewee quotes that appear in the margins of many pages of this thesis were drawn from the 12 transcribed tapes. However, the thesis as a whole is informed by the voices of all those I spoke with, and where possible I have included shorter quotes from my notes of the other interviews. Moreover, the examples that are described in my own words in the body of the text are drawn from the entire sample. Where possible, I have provided several identifying characteristics to contextualize the interviewees’ remarks. *All names have been changed to protect people’s privacy.*

The interviews I conducted were extremely conversational and wide-ranging; I rarely followed a prescribed format or questionnaire. As a rule, I simply asked people to tell me their stories, and this usually included some combination of the following: where they were born; who their parents were; where they grew up; what they did for work in the DR; what precipitated the decision to immigrate; how that experience has been; why they came to Lawrence; did they come straight here from the DR—and if not, where first; who came with them; what they do for work now and how that experience is for them; what their economic situation is like; how often they’ve been back; what are their plans for the future; if they are learning or know English; what they think are major problems or challenges facing Dominicans and Latinos in general in the City; what they think of Lawrence; and whether they think of themselves as Dominican or American or both.

**The Itinerary**

This thesis (such as it is; it probably constitutes more of a love poem to the City, liberally peppered with outrage) is divided into three parts. The first part, The Places, consists of two chapters, the Island and the City. Chapter One provides some background on the Dominican
Republic: a bit of history, a sense of the Island’s long-term, intimate, and problematic ties to the United States, and an awareness of the economic and political changes of the last 40 years. By grounding more abstract concepts such as “globalization” or “cultural creolization” in specific events and conditions in the Republic, this chapter aims to provide you, gentle reader, with a context for Dominican out-migration (where Dominican immigrants are coming from, as it were) as well as a sense of the way that events hundreds of miles apart are inextricably linked.

Chapter Two returns to Lawrence, and delves a little deeper into the City’s history of immigration, class and ethnic strife, and labor unrest. It offers information about demographic and economic change in Lawrence over the past 30 years, and explores some of the theories and findings about the role of immigrant labor in restructuring and declining industries, as they pertain to the City. This chapter will also briefly place the City in the context of nation-wide demographic change and the “Latinization” of many U.S. cities.

Part Two, the People, also consists of two chapters (a certain symmetry is desirable, a meager attempt at imposing order on an unruly world), both reporting on the findings from my research, interviews and work in the City. Much of the literature on Dominican immigrant communities in the U.S. has focused on the issue of transnationalism, arguing that a defining characteristic of Dominican migrants is a “dual-place” identity, a sense of existing differently in two countries and two cultures at once—or alternatively, as not existing fully in either place but instead in some liminal, hybrid mental/emotional/cultural space, the creation of which is shaped and driven by the actual physical back and forth movement of many Dominican immigrants. Thus, a major concern of this section will be to examine some of the evidence for this claim (oh, the cloaked and interrogatory stance of the thesis writer… where is my microscope? Where is the rack? Now where is that evidence?). Both chapters in this section will draw on case studies and empirical findings from other research to compare and contextualize characteristics, changes, and trends observed in the City.

Chapter Three will first supply some basic demographic information (where available) regarding both recent Dominican migration more broadly and the Dominican community in Lawrence. Who are Dominicans in Lawrence? What do they do? I will focus on sketching some of the economic, cultural, social, and political activities in which Dominicans in the City engage, grounding the reader in the working life of the community and its networks.

Chapter Four will shift the focus to attitudes of community members. It will report on individual motivations for migrating, attitudes toward both Lawrence and the home country, expectations and hopes for the future, and the challenges community members face in their struggle to thrive, as well as the resources on which they draw in this struggle.

Part Three engages that age-old planning dilemma: what are the ties between people and place? Given the findings and issues raised above, Chapter Five speculates about possible implications for community development efforts in the City and the political empowerment of Dominican residents. What are some of the particular challenges of planning and organizing in the City, given both the transnational activities of a number of its residents and the City’s position in a

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6 The reader will note that I believe these two activities to be complementary, and this belief doubtless informs the main concerns of this thesis.
larger, changing economy—a position characterized by one local academic as “the sinkhole in the regional lawn, staying wet so other places can stay dry.” While this Chapter will be informed by the insights I have gained from my community organizing work in the City, it is more of an effort to clearly articulate the nature of some of the challenges facing the Dominican community, and to suggest broad approaches to overcoming these challenges, than an attempt to recommend specific programs or policies.

Chapter Six will comprise some concluding remarks and an excess of suggestions for further research to plug the myriad holes and shortcomings of this document. It is to be hoped that these suggestions for further research will lead to some of the recommendations avoided above.

The View From Essex Street

Throughout the thesis you will find the voices, opinions, and histories of Dominican people in the City. Rather than relying solely on isolated quotes to illustrate particular points, I have often included substantial sections of an interview, placed alongside my own words, to provide a more visceral sense of (or counterpoint to) the argument being developed, and to bring alive the viewpoints of Dominican Lawrentians. Although I am not Dominican myself, I have tried in this small and imperfect way to participate in what Itzigsohn et al. (1999) have characterized as the project of the CUNY Center for Dominican Studies in New York: an attempt “to articulate the voices of Dominicans in the diaspora, transforming them from the objects of others’ discourses into subjects with their own voice” (p.333). Many of the quotes in the margins appear in the original Spanish, in an attempt to preserve the integrity of people’s stories and emphasize the bilingual nature of life in the City and community that is my subject. As I realize that many readers will not be familiar with Spanish, I have provided a (somewhat rough) translation of these quotes in Appendix 1.

A final note before we begin: this thesis is informed by the desire not only to better understand the City of Lawrence but also to use that understanding in the service of future community development efforts there. However, the use can only proceed from the understanding, and I therefore beg the reader’s patience for “traveling” quite a bit in the course of this document.

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7 Personal communication, Charlie Tontar, July 1998.
PART ONE: THE PLACES

Planners are intensely involved with the local. Our milieu is the neighborhood, the city, the region; we focus our energy and attention and understanding on the problems that confront us in particular places. However, many of the forces shaping these places are not local. In fact, many of our places are themselves not strictly local; they are intimately bound—by cultural, political, social, and economic ties—to other specific places. They could not survive otherwise. Indeed, in the words of one observer, our places have become “increasingly phantasmagoric: that is to say, locales are thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them.”

A migration is one kind of flow that connects places, and it is often embedded in and productive of other ties. In beginning to understand both the Dominican immigration to Lawrence and some of the defining characteristics of Dominican life there, it is necessary to look first at the two places, the island and the City, and the web of larger ties that bind them. Pessar (1982) captures part of this when she notes that “international migration is an historical relationship of economic interdependence between ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ societies. It is more than the migrant stream that links the sending and receiving societies.” While Pessar focuses explicitly on “the unequal system of exchange of commodities, capital and labor” connecting core and periphery, Sassen (1988) provides a broader formulation: “[u]nderstanding why a migration began entails an examination of conditions promoting outmigration in countries of origin and the formation of objective and subjective linkages with receiving countries that make such migration feasible.”

Thus, in the following two chapters I will explore some of the political and economic changes affecting both the Dominican Republic and Lawrence. Partially, this involves understanding the position of both places in the context of a changing global economic system, in order to draw out how “[i]mmigrants and immigration levels are directly related to the globalization of the economy... people... migrate in search of economic opportunities.” Of course, as we shall see, there are a number of other equally important factors shaping the Dominican immigration flow, including the 1965 liberalization of immigration laws, which eliminated the use of national origin, race, or ancestry as a basis for admittance to the U.S., and facilitated reunification of families split by the immigration process—not to mention the political and military influence the United States has traditionally exercised over the island.

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1 Anthony Giddens, quoted in Hannerz (p.25).
2 “Core” and “periphery” are, roughly speaking, more evocative terms for “developed” and “developing” nations.
3 Laws, 1998. I should note that it is not the purpose of this thesis to dip its dainty toes into the raging debate about globalization—does it exist, is it something new, etc. For our purposes, “globalization” may be said to refer to certain changes (occurring over roughly the last 35 years) in the pace, focus, and organization of worldwide economic activity, characterized by: the deregulation of capital markets and increasingly “free” flow of private investment capital into and out of various national economies; the geographic dispersal and fragmentation of production processes, such that regions are characterized more by the stage than the type of industry they support; the liberalization of trade laws, including the formation of several multilateral trade agreements (e.g., NAFTA), and the expansion of consumer markets; the rise of the transnational corporation as the dominant economic institution, accompanied by the growing role of foreign direct investment (FDI) in diverse national economies; and the central importance of advances in information, communications, and transportation technologies, which function as both facilitators of all these other forms of change and products themselves.
Nevertheless, as Sassen notes:

The current migration to the United States shares a number of general traits with earlier migration phases. But it is also predicated on specific conditions that arise out of the re-organization of the world economy over the last [three] decades… The overall result was the formation of a transnational space within which the circulation of workers can be regarded as one of several flows, including capital, goods, services, and information… the fact that not all countries became large-scale senders of migrants points to the need for specifying the manner in which countries are incorporated into this transnational space… [and] whether there are specific kinds of linkages between the U.S. and those countries that become major senders of immigrants to the U.S.

The exploration of these factors provides an important complement to more traditional explanations of immigration, including conditions of poverty, unemployment, overpopulation, or economic stagnation in sending countries, presence of economic opportunities in destination countries, and liberalization of immigration laws and quotas—none of which adequately explains the Dominican influx to Lawrence. For example, poverty and unemployment were endemic to the Dominican Republic long before large-scale emigration from that country began (Sassen, 1988; Betances, 1995; Black, 1986; Bray, 1987; Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991). In addition, many Dominicans came to Lawrence at a time when socioeconomic conditions in the City were going from bad to worse, and when the U.S. was actually tightening immigration controls in the mid-1980s. Moreover, as Sassen points out, “The major immigrant-sending countries are among the leading recipients of jobs lost in the U.S. and of U.S. foreign direct investment in labor-intensive manufacturing and service activities” (1988, p.16). This is certainly true for the Dominican Republic—which, as we shall see, has been a leading destination for U.S. multinational corporations. Ironically (in light of the flight of textile and garment industries from Lawrence), a large number of these firms are in the garment industry.

Hamilton and Chinchilla, in writing of the Mexican and Central American migration experiences, also emphasize the context of “transnational flows of capital, trade, and technology” (1996, p.195) that not only disrupt traditional economies in the sending countries, but also change conditions in “core” areas in ways that both intensify the need for migrant or immigrant labor, and problematize the reception of these new populations by native residents and workers. In relation to the Dominican influx to Lawrence, this means we cannot simply consider the historic role that immigrant labor has played in manufacturing industries. We also have to realize the newer dynamics at work. In one manifestation, dying industries in so-called obsolete locations like Lawrence, struggling with keener global competition, have essentially “imported”

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4 It is important to note here however that Dominican immigration to the U.S. in general began about 15 years earlier, and was greatly facilitated by the 1965 immigration reform. It is also important to note that the reasons why a migration continues are in some ways distinct from the reasons why it began; as we shall see in Chapter Four, the role of family ties in perpetuating the “migration chain” cannot be underestimated.

5 “Traditional economies” can refer to the indigenous economy of a developing nation, usually characterized by small and medium-scale agriculture.

6 This characterization often refers to the physical infrastructure (for example, Lawrence’s enormous multi-story red brick mill buildings) now deemed unsuitable for current manufacturing needs.
cheap immigrant labor as an alternative to shelling out the capital required (but unavailable) for foreign direct investment (exporting production, as it were). In another manifestation, many growing and competitive industries—as is certainly true for many of those in the greater Lawrence region—have restructured their production processes such that they can segment their labor demand, creating a core of more highly skilled, stable, permanent jobs, and using temp agencies or subcontracting to respond to seasonal fluctuations in product demand or fill lower-skilled positions (Piore, 1979). Finally, observers of economic restructuring often point to the growing polarization of jobs available (and consequently, the workforce). While the City itself, unsurprisingly, has had little luck in capitalizing on the high-tech and specialized service boom in the region (and the nation), it has experienced a growth in certain segments of the service sector, such as low-end business services—the necessary underbelly of the much-vaunted clean information economy. While many of these jobs are ones native workers refuse to fill, that does not diminish the resentment they often feel about these changes, which finds a convenient scapegoat in newcomers to the area.

What were the conditions in both places that helped make this immigration possible? What were the institutions and actions that facilitated and perpetuated the process?

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CHAPTER ONE
THE ISLAND

Colonization and Caudillismo
The Dominican Republic encompasses, roughly, the eastern two-thirds of the Island of Hispaniola, which lies between Cuba to the west and Puerto Rico to the east in the Caribbean Sea. Spanish colonization of the “New World” got off to an inauspicious but prophetic beginning on the Island when Cristóbal Colón landed there in 1492. During the next sixty years the Spanish settlers managed to exterminate the indigenous Taino Indian population (which numbered approximately one million) through an ingenious combination of forced labor, land and food seizure, physical abuse, and disease (Haggerty, 1991).

The entire Island remained a Spanish colony (called Santo Domingo1) until 1697, when the eastern third was ceded to France and became the plantation colony of Haiti. During the 1700s Santo Domingo flourished due to revived trade among the Spanish colonies, and “both immigration and importation of slaves increased... the population of the colony... [was] approximately 125,000 in 1790... about 40,000 were white landowners, about 25,000 were black or mulatto freedmen, and about 60,000 were slaves” (Haggerty, 1991)2.

The next sixty years were tumultuous ones. France gained control of the colony in the late 1790s, only to lose it again to Spain in 1809; in 1821 Santo Domingans declared their independence from Spain. The newly independent Haitian Republic took this opportunity to invade Santo Domingo, which remained under Haitian rule for the next 22 years. Many see the antipathy felt today by many Dominicans towards Haitians as having its roots in this occupation (intermingled with lingering racial prejudice). On February 27, 1844, due in part to the leadership of national hero Juan Pablo Duarte, Dominicans declared their independence.

1 Many Dominicans still refer to the entire Island as Santo Domingo, although technically that is just the name of the capital city now.
2 In contrast, Haiti at this time had about 30,000 white landowners, 27,000 freedmen, and over half a million slaves, accounting for the greater African heritage of the Haitian people.

Nosotros le decimos transculturación... eso no viene desde ahora, eso viene de antes de Cristóbal Colón. Nosotros le tenemos un sinónimo: “Complejo de Guacaganarí.” Guacaganarí fue uno de los cinco caciques que habitaban la isla cuando llegó Colón... Cuando Colón llegó, lo veían como dioses... Guacaganarí entregó parte de su territorio con tal de que ellos lo ayudaran a luchar contra los demás caciques. Nosotros siempre hemos tenido ese complejo... te voy a decir Complejo de Guacaganarí cuando tú quieres ser o cuando tú quieres dar para que te ayuden pero entregando parte de lo tuyo. Eso sucede cuando tú te crias aquí te crías de pequeño. Entonces tú tienes costumbres que no la tienen en el país... las costumbres que tienes aquí las pones en práctica allá.3

3 Interview, 3/5/99 (Woman, early 40s, teacher, here several years).
The Dominican Republic (DR) has had for most of its history an agricultural export economy, with sugar, tobacco, cacao, coffee, timber, and cattle assuming varying degrees of importance under varying degrees of local and foreign merchant and landowner control. The sugar planter class that developed in the DR in the late 1800s—and was later displaced by foreign (mostly U.S.) corporate takeover and consolidation—was largely composed of Cuban, Italian, German, Puerto Rican, and North American immigrants, further creolizing Dominican society (Betances, 1995). In the years following independence, a succession of caudillos ("men on horseback," or strongmen: usually military leaders or members of the political or economic elite) struggled for power in the country, forming various alliances with local merchant and agrarian elites, as well as with emerging U.S. interests in the Caribbean Basin.

**Neo-Colonization and Dictatorship**

By the early 1900s, increasing foreign debt (mostly to the U.S.), and growing political instability that threatened the interests of U.S. sugar corporations and banks (which by this time had almost complete control of these sectors of the economy), induced the U.S. to establish a customs receivership in the DR in 1905, initiate the Dominican-American Convention of 1907, which turned the nation into a "semiprotectorate of the United States" (Betances, 1995), and finally undertake a military occupation of the Island from 1916 to 1924.

In attempting to establish a government that was both strong internally and responsive to U.S. interests, the U.S. emphasized the creation of a strong national military apparatus that eventually paved the way for the rise to power of Generalissmo Rafael Leonidas Trujillo. Perhaps the most effective and brutal dictator in the history of the Dominican Republic, Trujillo—or the Benefactor, as he liked to be known—lost little time in putting his U.S.-Marine training to good use in concentrating military, political, and economic power in the hands of himself and a few hundred of his closest friends and relatives. During his thirty-year reign, he was responsible for the imprisonment, torture, and murder of thousands of political opponents, including the famous Mirabal sisters. At the same time, he and his cronies came to control (directly or indirectly) over half the economic assets of the country (Black, 1986).

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4 Interview, 4/8/99 (Woman, early 40s, teacher, 25 years in the U.S. (NY first)).
Interestingly, in spite of Trujillo’s well-known brutality and rapaciousness, some older Dominicans I spoke with in Lawrence revealed ambivalent feelings about him. While they deplored his excesses, they noted that Trujillo had been remarkably able to diminish U.S. control over the Island and restore a measure of sovereignty to the nation (however flawed). One person credited Trujillo with instilling a strong sense of Dominican national identity and pride in the Island’s citizens, and another cited the public safety benefits of the law-and-order atmosphere that prevailed for much of his regime.

**After the Benefactor: Political Origins of Migration**

The assassination of Trujillo in 1961 proved the catalyst for what has become a massive Dominican out-migration during the last four decades. As emigration was severely restricted during Trujillo’s reign (another manifestation of his desire for complete control over Dominican life), some of this was only natural and is attributable to pent-up demand. Less directly, however, Trujillo’s death sparked a number of political struggles and ideological turmoil in the Republic—turmoil that the U.S. feared might crystallize into revolution. One of the primary responses of the U.S. government to this ticklish situation in the early 1960s was to streamline and facilitate out-migration for those who wished to leave, in order to release some of the political pressure building in the streets of Santo Domingo (Mitchell, 1992).

As the decade progressed, an interim government gave way to the elected constitutionalist government of Juan Bosch, a left-leaning Dominican historian and writer who returned from exile in Cuba to lead a populist party, the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD), that called for a new constitution based on democratic rights for the working class, more egalitarian land ownership, and indigenous control of industry. This administration lasted all of seven months before falling to a U.S.-backed coup by members of the military and the merchant and banker class. Widespread political unrest continued and in 1965 the country erupted in civil war between the pro-Bosch Constitutionalists and the military-backed traditional elites. Predictably, the U.S.

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5 Ironically, although Trujillo was in many ways adept at securing U.S. support for his regime, especially by positioning himself as “the hemisphere’s foremost anti-communist,” this strategy eventually failed to serve him. It was U.S. fears that his dictatorship might finally spark a popular communist revolt (especially after Cuba) that led to CIA collaboration with his assassins.

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6 Interview, 3/2/99 (Man, late 50s, 21 years in the City, citizen).
intervened and initiated its second twentieth-century military occupation of the DR. Following the U.S.-mediated election of former Trujillo advisor and wily political survivor Joaquin Balaguer, "radical elements of the working and middle-class were implicitly offered the choices of migration or 'disappearance'" (Bray, 1984). A number of the first Dominican "settlers" of Lawrence in fact belonged to this "radical" group, and still expressed sorrow and anger at the outcome of these events and the subsequent direction of the country.

In fact, as Bray (1984) notes, the political motives for emigrating become clear with a glance at yearly emigration figures (see table), which show an increase not just after 1965, but after other major election years as well. This reasoning is corroborated by stories from many of my interviewees regarding the necessity of having political connections in order to get a good job—or sometimes any job. Many cited their (or a parent’s) lack of membership in the party of the moment, and the subsequent lack of employment opportunity as a major impetus to emigrate—forming a sort of political economy of emigration.

**Back to Business**

Balaguer’s job was to make the Island safe for foreign investment, and indeed several of my informants expressed quite strongly that Balaguer was in some ways worse than Trujillo; certainly his regime began with similar practices of repression, political terror, and corruption—albeit the benefits of this were spread slightly more widely among the ruling class. Under his rule, an import substitution sector was established by the state in the early 1970s, but met with limited success. Through his and subsequent administrations, the country moved toward an economic development model based on export processing zones (EPZs, also known as free trade zones), tourism, and banking; Gulf-Western, Nestle, Falconbridge, Alcoa, Philip Morris, Chase Manhattan Bank, and Shell were among the major North American transnational corporations that began investing heavily in the

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**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Emigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>3,045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>4,603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td><strong>10,683</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>7,537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>9,504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td><strong>16,503</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>11,514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>9,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>10,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td><strong>10,807</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>12,624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>10,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>13,858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td><strong>15,680</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>14,066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>15,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>11,655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td><strong>19,458</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>17,519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>17,245</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Years in Bold are Election Years*

Adapted from Bray, 1984 and Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991. (Immigration and Naturalization Service Data)

* 1976 includes an additional 3 month period due to changes in INS enumeration periods.

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7 Refers to an economic development strategy in which a region tries to produce internally those goods and services it had been in the practice of importing.

8 These zones are a common strategy for bringing foreign investment capital into a nation. Typically they offer investors tax incentives and freedom from certain state regulations and tariffs in return for significant job creation.
DR at this time. These foreign corporations soon controlled the leading sectors of the Island’s economy (Betances 1995).

In the early 1980s, the U.S. drastically cut their sugar quotas from the DR and agricultural employment plummeted, deepening an economic crisis that culminated in International Monetary Fund intervention, currency devaluation (1983), and economic restructuring. Currency devaluation sent Dominican wages into a nose-dive, which made the country extremely attractive to foreign investment and stimulated a massive expansion of export manufacturing in the EPZs, growing rural-to-urban migration stimulated by capital-intensive, large-scale agricultural development, enormous growth in the tourism industry, and the informalization of much economic activity, especially within the capital. Tricicleros, or street vendors, became a common sight in Santo Domingo, and odd-jobbing increased. During the 1980s:

- Manufacturing exports grew over 300% (the textile and garment industries comprise 36% of EPZ employment);
- The real minimum wage declined over 60%, making Dominican labor among the cheapest in the Caribbean (average monthly wages were US $67.20 in 1987);
- Unemployment grew to 27% (lower for men, higher for women);
- Self-employment rose over 35%;
- Income inequality widened, such that the richest 10% of the population received two-thirds of all income;
- Female labor force participation increased from 9.3% in 1960 to 38% in 1990;
- In 1992, the DR had the world’s 4th largest EPZ economy.


The Dominican government followed a policy of providing tax holidays, tariff exemption, labor repression, and profit repatriation for the foreign—mostly U.S.-owned—transnational corporations operating in the EPZs. The U.S. also instituted its Caribbean Basin Initiative, a policy that allowed duty-free treatment of exports, excluding textiles, apparel (except if made with U.S.-manufactured cloth), oil, and petroleum. As a result, export processing contributes less to Dominican GDP than sugar production (this after the closing of six state-owned sugar factories following the U.S. quota reduction) (Safa, 1995), and creates almost no supply or

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9 Interview, 3/8/99 (Man, 40s, one year in City, factory worker (professor in the DR)).
10 Interview, 3/2/99 (see note 6).
demand linkages or technology transfer to the indigenous economy. Locally-owned smaller export industries (in tobacco, cacao, sugar, coffee, etc.) were steadily eroded by the reduction in import tariffs mandated by IMF policies. Moreover, several studies have documented the high turnover in EPZ firms that prefer a docile (mostly female) workforce and are in a position to fire troublesome workers easily, as well as the role of agricultural transnationals in appropriating land and resources formerly sustaining a class of small farmers (Kowalewski, 1983; Safa 1995; Black, 1986; Sassen, 1988).

Who Feels the Squeeze?

It was said about the great wave of immigrants who came to America on steamships at the turn of the century that the cowardly stayed home and the weak died on the way... In fact for more than a century, immigration has been a process by which America skims the cream of other nations’ human capital. (Briggs and Moore, 1994:143)

It is by now a truism in migration studies to say that it is rarely the poorest of the poor, or those who are unemployed in their home country, who migrate. Observers of earlier migration from the Dominican Republic have demonstrated fairly convincingly that many migrants came from urban, middle-class backgrounds, with a somewhat lesser percentage hailing from the rural petty bourgeoisie (Bray, Grasmuck and Pessar, Portes). The reasons for this propensity are manifold. For example, the development trajectory of export agriculture in the northern Cibao Valley has resulted in an increasing concentration of land in a diminishing number of hands, exacerbating class polarization in the region. Many middle-class households who were squeezed out and in danger of becoming proletarianized (forced to work as wage laborers on others’ large holdings) chose migration instead, both to the cities and abroad if they could (Bray, 1987).

11 This statement, and the quote above, is not to say that those who remain behind are less able, but that migration often requires financial, social, and informational resources that the very poor are unlikely to possess.

12 Ironically, most of these migrants to the U.S. are absorbed into the low-wage, “proletarian” manufacturing and services sector. Bray makes an important distinction when he notes that many of these migrants are “adopting a proletarian strategy,” not becoming proletarianized. In some sense what they do in the U.S. is merely a means to secure enough money to re-amass landholdings back home.

13 Interview, 3/8/99 (see note 9).
In addition, export-oriented industrialization, combined with certain government employment policies, actually led to an enormous expansion of the Dominican middle class starting in the 1970s (as measured by both employment growth in managerial and professional occupations, and increased enrollment in higher education) (Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991). However, employment growth (which later stagnated) was not sufficient to absorb this growing sector. Moreover, evidence from my interviews indicates that the necessity of having a *comadre* or *compadre*—a “godmother” or “godfather” with social or political connections—in order to get certain jobs or advance in a career continued unabated. Indeed, Portes (1990) argues, “relative, not absolute deprivation lies at the core of most contemporary migration... [these are] the groups for whom the gap between aspirations and local realities is most poignant.”

**Still the Middle Class?**

At this point it is worth mentioning Michael Piore’s argument that a labor migration like the Dominican one which draws primarily at the beginning from the aspiring middle class will eventually shift to a more rural flow, as has been the case in Puerto Rico (Piore, 1979). While the Dominican migration to the United States does not completely follow the “birds of passage” model (for example, in its initiatory and ongoing political elements), it does appear that Piore’s prediction has some validity. While I was able to interview very few people from more rural and less-educated backgrounds, this was due to time constraints and difficulty of access. Most of my interviewees, several of whom worked in local factories in the area, felt that the majority of Dominicans entering Lawrence now belonged to the rural working poor, specifically from the Cibao Valley; many of these migrants have low levels of education and literacy. It may well be that, as Piore speculates, the institutional and social structures that emerge around migration over time facilitate the increasing absorption of rural populations into the flow (Piore, 1979), perhaps aided by the family reunification mechanism of U.S. immigration policy. However, as Bray (1987) argues, the inequitable opportunity structures, marked by patronage and corruption, which have survived for much of Dominican history (and may even be exacerbated by dependent capitalist development), seem to ensure the middle class’ continuing participation in, if not domination of, the migration flow.  

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14 This perspective is supported by many informants as well.

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15 Interview, 2/11/99 (Man, 50s, teacher (trained as engineer), 12 years in the City).
“Cultural-Ideological Links”

To return for a moment to the role of multinational firms in this process, it is important to point out that these corporations serve not only to disrupt the traditional economy of the Republic, aggravating poverty, unemployment, and social polarization, but also to create awareness of and linkages to life in the U.S., creating a path toward perceived opportunity that once blazed is not so easily blocked. While some migrants are those who worked directly for a U.S. firm in the free trade zones and became to a certain degree Americanized through their experience there, foreign direct investment and the penetration it implies of the local Dominican market (one interviewee referred to the capital as “Franchise City USA”\footnote{Interview, 1/28/99 (Woman, late 20s, nonprofit staff).} can act more subtly as “a structure that creates certain conditions for emigration to emerge as an option” \cite{sassen:1988}; or as Piore (1979) elegantly puts it:

the same institutional ties between regions or countries that facilitate population movements also facilitate the movement of jobs and capital in the other direction… the implantation of industry in the underdeveloped regions must serve to expand the horizons of the native population and is quite possibly a critical factor in the development of a conception of the world that accords a place within the recognized job hierarchy to the kinds of employment the migrants find abroad.

Moreover, the weakness and vulnerability of organized labor in the DR noted by some authors (Betances, 1995; Safa, 1995), is probably in some ways exacerbated and reinforced by the role of migration in creating a sense of another option. Labor militancy is not worth it if you have the possibility of migrating to a better situation, and migration becomes more attractive in the face of poor working conditions. As we shall see in later chapters, a version of this unpleasant catch-22 prevails in Lawrence as well.

The Other Side of Profit Repatriation

A final key point in this chapter deals with the critical importance of remittances—money sent back home by immigrants—to the Dominican economy. In the face of declining opportunities at home, many Dominican families have become deeply invested in migration; one study (Lozano, 1997) found that 75% of Dominican families in

\begin{itemize}
\item Before I came to the United States I was working for a Western trading company in the free zone in San Pedro. It was a company that was assembling women’s clothing. I worked there as a production engineer, and then for maybe six, seven months before I came I was the assistant manager... Also, I was going to Universidad... I was in my second year of mechanical engineering...
\item I came, and after you get to the United States, one thing I wasn’t ready for was for the frustration of dealing with people... I had to be 23, 24. The thing is that I knew some English. I thought I knew enough to handle myself. I was working in an American company. You wouldn’t know it was in the Dominican Republic; all the managers and when I had to call the States was in English. But now you find out that you don’t know enough English to deal with people who speak English\footnote{Interview, 2/12/99 (Man, 40s, here 20+ years, professional).}.
\end{itemize}
several Santo Domingo neighborhoods had a family member abroad, and over 25% of these families were receiving remittances that constituted almost half their annual income. In 1993 remittances from the U.S. to the D.R. totaled nearly $1 billion and served as the second-largest source of international dollar earnings for the country (Betances, 1995); in contrast, the EPZs (which employed 142,300 Dominicans in 1992, less than half the Dominican workforce abroad) netted $300 million toward the balance of payments (in 1992) (Gereffi, 1996). This staggering total has ensured that the Dominican government has a stake in supporting the continued migration process as well. While foreign multinationals are busy repatriating the enormous profits they derive from the free trade zones to banks in the United States, Canada, and Asia, Dominican migrants are also busily countering that capital flow with an opposite one of their own, as the dollars earned in American jobs are sent back to feed families, buy coveted consumer goods, and purchase land and houses in the Dominican Republic.

**Maintaining the Connection**
Remittances are but one of the ties migrants forge between the new country and the old. In fact, as most Dominicans—like the majority of other immigrants, from the Italians and the Polish in the early 1900s to the Mexicans today—enter the U.S. with the idea that their stay here is a temporary one, multiple connections—political, social, and economic—are often maintained. As we shall see in coming chapters, that dream of returning is not so easily realized. Nevertheless, it gives rise to a whole set of practices that in some sense stand in for the permanent return envisioned, and can take different forms depending on the social class, occupation, and stage in the life course of an individual. As Thomas-Hope (1985) notes, “The migration pattern that evolved in the Caribbean and became well-established was not usually seen as a means of severing relationships with the homeland and family, but rather as extending Island opportunities and circumventing the constraints to upward mobility imposed by the system at home.”

**Conclusion**
A history of U.S. political and economic intervention into the Dominican Republic, including two military occupations during the 20th century and a strong American corporate presence, has led some authors to characterize the DR as a “semicolonial” state, and has engendered numerous linkages

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**Interview, 3/5/99** (Man, 40s, union member, Malden Mills).
between the two nations. What happens when the semi-colonized start semi-colonizing back? The next chapter will set the stage for this by taking a closer look at the City of Lawrence, a recent “Dominican colony”\textsuperscript{20} in Massachusetts.

\textsuperscript{20} Interview, 3/1/99 (Man, former Constitutionalist (supporter of Juan Bosch—see Chapter Two), 24 years in Lawrence).
CHAPTER TWO
THE CITY

Ironies
Taking into consideration the traditional rivalry between Lowell and Lawrence and my own fierce attachment to the latter City, I will nevertheless begin to talk about Lawrence by referring to Lowell, which one author has described as representing “in microcosm the intertwining of the industrialization process and immigration in the United States” (Kolack, 1983). As I discussed both profit repatriation and remittances in Chapter One, it might be interesting to compare that dynamic with this observation of the immigrants working in the Lowell mills of the early 1900s: “these newcomers, first entirely Irish, later French Canadians from the Provinces, were treated precisely as if they were part of the machinery which ground out the millions being produced for the rich managers and millowners who spent the money not in Lowell but in New York, Boston, Paris, and London.” As the same sort of “domestic profit repatriation” practices applied in Lawrence (where, for example, mill owner William Wood built beautiful homes for himself and his family, and a model village for his managers, in the neighboring upper-class town of North Andover), this observation can help us understand the role the City—at the intertwined levels of its infrastructure and residents—has always played within a capitalist system of production. In this chapter I will begin to trace this intertwining through both industrialization and deindustrialization in the City (and the region, known as the Merrimack Valley), as well as looking at the character of immigrant life in the City.

The Usual Statistics
As a City whose raison d’être was the textile industry, once-booming Lawrence has never fully recovered from the manufacturing flight that devastated many Northeastern

American Dreams in the Immigrant City
They [material things] are part of the American dream you are following... I would like to hope that you do not think that I have put these things in the first place but they are part of the dream you are following. Because when you come to this country you think that you will be living the way you have seen in the films, in the pictures, in the magazines, and everything. And what are these things? They are a car, an expensive place where to live, a new house with good modern inner systems, with air-conditioner, in the summer to have vacation. Isn’t that the American way of living?

1 These words, of course, just as easily could have been written about Lawrence.
2 Cardinal O’Connell, quoted in Kolack, 1983.
3 Tempered by the occasional philanthropic project, like a public library.
4 Current native indignation at Dominican remittance levels in Lawrence ignores the dollars that have always flowed out of the City to the same mill owners for whom their parents and grandparents labor (not to mention the hefty remittances sent by those parents and grandparents to families in the Old Country, a point I will return to later).

5 Interview, 2/11/99 (Man, 50s, teacher (trained as engineer), 12 years in the City).
industrial cities. Lawrence (as the oft-quoted statistics go) is the 23\textsuperscript{rd} poorest city in the United States, with the lowest per capita income in Massachusetts and unemployment levels that consistently hover at twice the regional, Commonwealth, and national rates. Its high school recently lost accreditation, and resident education levels fall well below Commonwealth averages. Home-ownership rates are 35\% citywide, and about 1/3 that in the mostly Latino north side, where vacant lots and boarded-up buildings bear mute testimony to the arson wave that flamed through the City in the early 1990s. The Lawrence population is also substantially younger than the Massachusetts average.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.1 Income and Poverty, Lawrence and MA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lawrence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Capita Income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino Per Capita Income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino Poverty Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinos as % of Total Poor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1990 U.S. Census

Lawrence has been bleeding manufacturing jobs since textile and shoe producers began moving to the non-union South in the 1920s (interestingly, this trend coincided with the beginning of major U.S. restrictions on immigration). The process intensified in the late 1960s, as more manufacturers moved offshore—to countries like the Dominican Republic—again seeking lower-wage labor. Lawrence was not alone in this experience; as Muller (1993) notes, "by the 1960s, with factories relocating first to other parts of the country and then overseas, most cities experienced a sharp decline in their manufacturing fortunes. Hardest hit were apparel, textile, shoes, furniture, and electronics" (p.120). Between 1969 and 1988 the City lost nearly half of its manufacturing jobs (from nearly 18,000 down to 9,000) (Borges-Mendez, 1993, p.149). The City was also hard hit by the recession of the early 1990s, again losing over 5,000 jobs, or 20\% of its employment base; about 2,000 of these jobs were in the manufacturing sector (Andors et al., 1998).

As much of the U.S. moves into a "post-industrial" economy, Lawrence's economy is still an amazing 35\% manufacturing-

\[6\] I love citing myself.

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**Table 2.2 Unemployment Rates, 1993 to 1997: Lawrence vs. MA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Lawrence</th>
<th>MA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training

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Unas de las cosas es que el dominicano ha imigrado más a Lawrence que fue la tranquilidad... tú sabes que Lawrence es pequeño y está fuera de las grandes urbes. Se parece más a nuestros barrios, a nuestro pueblo, los muchachos pueden jugar en las calles, pueden estar fuera de su casa hasta tarde, sobre todo en el verano, eso no puede suceder en otras ciudades. Entonces la tranquilidad es lo que siempre atrae para que nosotros vengamos a vivir para acá.\[7\]

\[7\] Interview, 3/5/99 (Woman, early 40s, teacher, here several years).
based, and has remained so for the past ten years, through recession and (mild) recovery. Less than half of these jobs are now in the textile industry; a substantial portion are concentrated in paper and plastic production, metal fabrication, and warehousing/distribution—a common re-use for mill space that does not meet the single-tier space needs of modern manufacturing. While the City has also lost jobs in FIRE \(^8\) and trade, growing sectors include health services (anchored by a well-regarded regional hospital) and low-end business services such as janitorial and security (Andors et al., 1998). As we shall see later, the City is also home to a fairly vital small business sector featuring a sizable number of Dominican entrepreneurs. Dominicans in Lawrence own a plethora of restaurants, travel agencies, clothing stores, hair salons, bodegas (corner stores) and multi-service centers.\(^9\)

There is some evidence that Lawrence residents are filling regional manufacturing jobs as well. In 1990, according to the Census, only 40% of Lawrence residents worked in the City; another 36% worked in the region. Conversations with three local temporary employment agencies of varying sizes—most of whom work with a majority Latino population—indicate that a number of Lawrence’s residents are serving the temporary and seasonal labor force needs of manufacturers in North Andover, Haverhill, Wilmington, and other neighboring towns and cities. This is a phenomenon which I will return to later.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>1996 % of Total Employment (Private Profit/Nonprofit)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>0.14% 0.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>2% 3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>36% 17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and Public Utilities</td>
<td>3% 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale and Retail Trade</td>
<td>16% 27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance, Insurance, Real Estate</td>
<td>2% 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>41% 39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MA Division of Employment and Training, ES-202 Series

\(^8\) Finance, insurance, and real estate.

\(^9\) Multi-service centers are businesses that provide a variety of financial and accounting services, including facilities for phoning and sending money abroad. Their ubiquitous presence on the north side of the City is one indication of the volume of remittances emanating from Lawrence.

---

Es duro cuando tú vienes sin saber un idioma. Empecé a trabajar en una factoría donde fabrican zapatos. Esa fue mi primer experiencia de trabajo aquí... después de eso me fui a otro trabajo que era de un laundry... Estuve ahí un promedio de seis años... Empecé ahí a trabajar en esa cosiendo, reparando las ropas y ahí mismo comencé a vender ropa entre mis compañeras de trabajo. Hice una clientela grande. I went to New York y después decidí instalarme aquí... hay personas que tienen mucho más tiempo que yo y no se han podido independizar. Trabajan todavía en factoría...

Cualquiera que sea, es muy diferente cuando tú estás en una factoría. Trabajando en línea. Hay muchas personas que han venido aquí y han podido progresar pero la gran mayoría no es tan fácil.\(^10\)

\(^10\) Interview, 2/17/99 (Woman, 40s, business owner, 16 years in Lawrence).
Within the City, there is often tension between the older Anglo residents (who dominate city government and politics) and the newer Latino residents, over issues as diverse as bilingual education, residency requirements for municipal jobs, and political participation. For example, the U.S. Justice Department has been called in several times to monitor elections and prevent discrimination against Latino voters, and is currently suing the City for unfair election practices. I think it is safe to say that this tension and the ensuing political struggles have at least some of their roots in the economic situation engendered by a confluence of factors. As Sassen (1988) points out, "the 1965 liberalization of U.S. immigration policy [was] but one instance of a whole series of policies... that had the effect of internationalizing the country's economy." The sudden influx of new immigrants after four decades of relative isolation (during which immigration became a colorful part of the City's past), combined with a drastic reduction in, and degradation of, local manufacturing jobs, did not breed native tolerance and understanding. Even if many of the remaining jobs were ones that native workers would not want—numerous authors have emphatically refuted the myth that immigrants "steal" jobs from natives (Bonilla, 1993; Borjas, 1990; Moore, 1994; Muller, 1993, Piore, 1979; Portes, 1981; Sassen, 1995)—it still was not easy to see them go to newcomers.\footnote{In fact, Muller points out that immigration often tends to have both an employment multiplier and a job redistribution effect, as new arrivals take lower wage, lower skill jobs, and shift natives upward.}

An International City

In 1912 the Merrimack Valley had the highest proportion of foreign-born residents in the United States (Kolack, 1983). A good number of those immigrants resided in Lawrence, which since its inception has been populated by successive waves of immigrants come to work in the mills and factories.\footnote{In addition to fleeing conditions of poverty or environmental hardship in their native lands, some of these workers were lured to Lawrence by mill company posters and advertisements in their native lands (Cole, 1964). Indeed, Piore (1979) argues that many labor migrations begin because of recruitment on the part of employers.}. The Irish were the first, followed by French Canadians, Englishmen, and Germans in the late 1800s, Italians, Poles, Lithuanians, and Syrians around the turn of the century and early 1900s, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans in the mid-late 1900s, and most recently Vietnamese and Cambodians. The City is now predominantly Latino.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Ancestry} & \textbf{1990} \\
\hline
Total Pop. & 70,027 \\
Arabic & 1,525 \\
Dominican & 10,870 \\
English & 2,397 \\
French & 5,105 \\
Fr. Canadian & 4,251 \\
German & 1,601 \\
Irish & 6,193 \\
Italian & 6,645 \\
Puerto Rican & 14,661 \\
\hline
Foreign-Born & 14,673 \\
% Foreign & 21% \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Lawrence: Ancestry of Selected Groups, 1990}
\end{table}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Table 2.4 Lawrence Foreign Born Population, 1910 (Selected Groups)} \\
\hline
\textbf{Country of Birth} & \textbf{Population in 1910} \\
\hline
Total Pop. & 85,892 \\
Ireland & 5,943 \\
England & 5,659 \\
Scotland & 1,336 \\
Canada & 9,498 \\
Germany & 2,301 \\
Russia & 4,366 \\
France & 788 \\
Italy & 6,693 \\
Turkey & 2,077 \\
\hline
Foreign-Born & 41,319 \\
% Foreign & 48% \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Lawrence Foreign Born Population, 1910 (Selected Groups)}
\end{table}
From its inception, Lawrence was in many ways highly integrated into an international economy, powered by immigrant labor to produce textiles for both the American and European market. The City’s motto was, “We weave the world’s worsteds,” and it was at one time considered “the leading worsted center in America,” (Cole 1964) home to the enormous Arlington, Wood, Atlantic, Pacific, Pemberton, Washington, and Ayer Mills. In 1878, two-thirds of the total factory workforce was foreign-born. In 1912 Lawrence was the site of a famous labor uprising known as the Bread and Roses Strike, an event that was partially organized by the International Workers of the World and owed a substantial debt to the influence of Italian anarchists (Cole, 1964).

Continuities: The City Repeats Itself
A look back at the City’s first seventy-five years of existence is a fascinating lesson not only in “the more things change, the more they stay the same” worldview, but also some of its nuances—the realization that as Hannerz (1996) puts it, “in large part, change is made up of other people’s continuities, quite suddenly coming up close to us as well, without necessarily being fully understood, or fully accepted” (p.25). As Cole (1964) assiduously documents, the increasing diversity of the Immigrant City paved the way for repeated cycles of ethnic and religious conflict as each previous group, fearful of its own still-tentative position in the City’s political and economic structure (and often forgetful of its own experience at the bottom of the pile), turned upon the next.13 Thus, the one-time “noisy rabble” (p.40) of “shanty Irish” complained of French-Canadian behavior that would “shame a community of savages,” (p.58) and the French-Canadians in their turn condemned the “drink-frenzied foreigners” and lingering “old country habits” (p.90) among the Italian.

The City demonstrates other continuities as well. The same high rates of illiteracy, combined with a lack of fluency in English, that trouble school teachers and nonprofit agency staff in Lawrence today plagued the City at the turn of the century. Substandard housing, arson, malnutrition, and overcrowding (especially in North Lawrence) were common, along with unstable employment—the mills often halted or reduced production, depending the vagaries of the market—

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13 With this melodramatic characterization I do not mean to imply that these attitudes were uniform throughout the City; indeed Cole cites a number of examples of different groups speaking out on the need for tolerance.

14 Interview, 4/8/99 (Woman, 40s, teacher, community leader).
and low wages. In 1875, “the average Lawrence wage of $400 a year was far below the state average of $476” (Cole, 1964) (in 1875 dollars).

**Longing for Home: The Other Side of the American Dream**

_Tú añoraras lo que no tienes—cuando lo tienes, no es como pensabas._ (You yearn for what you do not have—when you have it, it is not what you were thinking.)

In 1884 the Cunard Line charged only $15 for steerage passage to Ireland from Boston. The Irish, not content with individual trips, formed an excursion club to raise money for a group voyage. Italians often went home for the winter to participate in festivals and to avoid the cold as well as to see their families. And Canadians, not facing the dangers of an ocean voyage, were frequent visitors...by 1912...[h]alf of the French-Canadians, a quarter of the English, and a sixth of the Germans and Irish had visited their old homes. (Cole, 1964:100)

Yearning for the old country is nothing new in Lawrence. While it is popular among many older residents in the City to speak of “the Spanish” as a transient population, apt to return home at a moment’s notice, the increasing—and increasingly rooted—Dominican population of the City belies that assumption. The transiency stereotype ignores the complexity of ways that the Dominicans, in startlingly similarity to the Irish, French-Canadians, Syrians, and Italians before them, have chosen to maintain connections to their homelands (as we shall see in part two). Relief funds for those at home suffering destitution or disaster, financial contributions, advocacy, and volunteer work in support of political movements (e.g. Irish home rule, Armenian independence from Turkey) and parties, and remittances were all part of life in the City; indeed, in 1910, “money orders issued in Lawrence for sending money abroad amounted to $150,000 a year” (Cole, 1964) (figure is in 1910 dollars).

Of course, many Dominicans do return to the Island, even after years in the City. The Irish, French-Canadian, Italians, and other earlier immigrants all made permanent returns as well, often when work in the mills was scarce (Cole, 1964).

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15 Interview 4/28/99 (Woman, 40s, business owner, here 30 years).

16 Interview, 2/11/99 (Man, 50s, teacher (trained as engineer), 12 years in the City).
But the difference between what one expects in terms of duration of stay in the receiving country and what actually winds up happening cannot be emphasized enough, as my informants mentioned over and over. As Piore (1979) points out, a defining characteristic of many temporary migrations is that they tend to turn into permanent settlements as a community becomes established in the host country, and strong social networks ensure a continuing stream of new members. Moreover, as we shall see in part two, those who return often come back again, realizing that changes both in themselves and back home often made the yearned-for Island a dream indeed.

Workers of the World?
In spite of its legendary status among labor organizers as the site of the Bread and Roses strike, Lawrence has historically had a fairly weak union presence. Cole notes that, “unions in Lawrence had never been able to organize more than a tenth of the city’s workers at any one time before 1912. The very absence of unionism was one of the reasons why William Wood, President of the American Woolen Company, built the Wood Mill in Lawrence in 1905” (p.177), and it is still one of the reasons companies have come to the City during the last thirty years. Organizing efforts have no doubt been complicated by the difficulties of communicating across culture and language among fragmented ethnic groups (interestingly, Cole documents how the successful Bread and Roses organizers coordinated their efforts along ethnic lines, organizing within groups before bringing all together). Ambivalent relationships between older and newer residents also confound this process. On one hand, more settled groups may be more likely to take a conservative stance and disapprove of labor militancy among newer groups; on the other, newer groups are often used to sabotage the advocacy and security of more settled groups.

Immigrant Labor Today
Between 1970 and 1990, the net population increase in the United States due to immigration is estimated at 10 to 12

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17 Interview, Chet Sidell, President/ Owner of KGR Industries, February 1998.
18 One interviewee recounted how one manager in a factory in which she had worked wanted her to report any talk of unionizing among other workers to him.

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19 Interview, 3/5/99 (Man, 40s, union member, Malden Mills).
million people (including undocumented immigration); this represents over 25% of the overall population gain in the U.S. Over 4/5 of these immigrants settle in metropolitan areas, and most locate in central cities. Moreover, “of the nation’s largest cities, only two, San Diego and Phoenix, retained a solid [?], non-Hispanic white majority in 1990... in all but Detroit and Philadelphia, Hispanics comprise a fifth or more of the population” (Muller, 1993). Thus, the demographic shift in Lawrence (see Table 2.6) mirrors the “Latinization” of cities nationwide. The inclusion of raw numbers in the table also allows us to notice the white flight from the City that accompanied Latino immigration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.6: Demographic Change in Lawrence, 1970-1990</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/NA/Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Latinos 5+ yrs. Old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resided Abroad 5 Yrs. Ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Region (SMSA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Borges-Mendez, 1992; U.S. Census 1990

In this section I will look at how these newcomers fit into the Lawrence economy, drawing first on Borges-Mendez (1993) to note that, not surprisingly, “Latino immigrants in Massachusetts manufacturing have been a main source of tractable labor in secondary20, unskilled, low-paying jobs at the bottom of the occupational ladder” (p.104). To put this phenomenon in context, Borges-Mendez argues that there have been changes in the structure, labor processes, and human-resources management practices of both large and small firms in the Commonwealth. Some of these trends include:

- The decline of traditional manufacturing industries such as textile and shoe production;
- The expansion of the service sector [at both the high end (e.g., financial and legal services) and the low end (e.g., domestic workers, janitorial services)];
- The high-tech re-industrialization of the state’s economy [especially in sectors connected to the “information society,” like electronics and instruments production];
- The modernization of technologies and processes of production, accompanied by the diversification of products, services, and markets;

20 The secondary labor market usually refers to jobs that are low wage, less stable and secure, and lack employment contracts, health and vacation benefits, union membership, or the means for advancement.
• The use of out-sourcing and vertical disintegration;21
• The segmentation of labor strategies, including the use of “employment at will” for both the low-skilled and seasonal elements of production.22

Unfortunately, the best of these tendencies (which all have ambivalent results in terms of both jobs and wages), such as technological innovation and high-tech development, have not been followed by Lawrence firms. Instead, the disturbing evidence from the City indicates that for dying traditional industries, Latinos provide “the necessary cheap labor to ride the decline... permit[ing] firms to continue operating without any major investments in technology, job training, and development” (p.114). Even in those industries insulated from or competitive in the larger economy, job opportunities are limited: “Latinos are heavily used in labor-intensive, small- and mid-size manufacturing firms to staff unskilled and semi-skilled jobs that pay low wages and offer little prospect for wage increases, training, advancement, and job development” (p.107). Furthermore, in light of the aforementioned role of temporary agencies in the Lawrence labor market—some of whom work with hundreds of employees weekly and anywhere from five to over 50 firms in the region—it appears plausible that many of the City’s Latinos are staffing the uncertain end of firm needs in other towns as well. My conversations with temporary agency staff and workers, as well as other interviewees, would support this.23

As Borges-Mendez points out, the trends mentioned above (which are part of a larger global economic restructuring) affect not only the relationships between “core” and “periphery” nations (or regions) but also the relationships...
between firms within the core itself; this in turn affects the employment and opportunity structures that immigrants enter into the the receiving country.\textsuperscript{25} For example, as declining basic manufacturers bank on cheap immigrant labor, they need a reliable supply. A very common method of ensuring this is doing recruitment through current employees, often offering a “headhunter’s fee”\textsuperscript{26} (as one interviewee put it) to those who refer friends and family members to the company. Several informants mentioned this as a common practice thirty years ago, and other evidence indicates that this practice still exists\textsuperscript{27}. As Borges-Mendez points out, while this can lead to quick employment for the newcomer, it often traps him/her in a dead-end situation that delays or reduces access to other opportunities.

It is important to note that low-wage, low-skill jobs are also a function of growth sectors in an economy, not just declining ones. High-tech and specialized service sectors generate low-wage jobs both directly, through their occupational structure (e.g., services to buildings accompany high-end office development), and indirectly, through the ancillary sectors (restaurants, cleaning services) and consumption patterns of high-end workers (Sassen, 1988). Thus, low-wage, low-skill workers from the City (where service sector employment has grown steadily since the late 1960s) service the underbelly of the booming high-tech Merrimack Valley and Route 128 region. Through the many ramifications of its history as an industrial city and a mill town—including, for example, by far the highest regional concentration of affordable rental housing (Stevenson, 1992)—Lawrence has effectively become a ghetto of low-wage, low-skill jobs and workers indispensable to the regional and global economy.

\textit{Segueways…}

This, however, is not all the City is—not by a long shot. As we continue into Part Two of our story, I hope to complicate the picture just painted by turning your attention, now firmly grounded in these two places, to the people moving between them.

\textsuperscript{25}In fact, one executive in a multinational corporation with substantial holdings in the Dominican Republic called it (with no prompting on my part) the “internationalization or globalization of both the supply and demand for labor” (Email Communication, Mike Tagney of Colgate, 3/15/99).

\textsuperscript{26}Interview, 1/28/99.

\textsuperscript{27}Personal communication, Tamar Kotelchuck, 4/26/99.

I worked at ITT for about five-and-a-half years and I held some other part-time jobs as I was working there… I progressed to different levels, made more money as I went along. I was taking computer classes and to pay that I was working for a temporary company, Office Specialists. They used to send me to different places, and they sent me to this… one place and when I got there the supervisor called me and said-- he gave me some explanation, but he said, “What I want you to do is clean the bathroom.” I looked at him, I thought for a second, and then I said this is not for me, I didn’t come here to clean bathrooms, but after a couple of minutes I said I came here to work. So I went to the bathroom and I started singing merengues and dancing by myself and cleaning the bathroom and he was so amazed and surprised…\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{28}Interview, 2/12/99 (Man, 40s, here 20+ years, professional).
PART TWO: THE PEOPLE

Locally, we may ask, who are the globalizers?¹

Lest the picture of Lawrence writhing beneath the boot of global capitalists become too oppressive, let me remind the reader that these limited pages cannot do justice to the actual City: to the mellow glow of the red brick mill buildings in late afternoon sunlight, the enormous tree-covered Common in the center of town, the freshly-roasted chicken at Pollo Típico, the intensely flavored almond bars at Tripoli Bakery; to the Public Library, brimming with younger Lawrence residents reading and socializing daily, and the numerous churches, from stately grey stone bastions of Catholicism to Pentecostal storefronts with hand-painted lettering. Ethnic businesses, restaurants, and clubs line North and South Broadway, Essex, Jackson, and South Union Streets. Twenty-four languages were spoken in the City in 1990, among them Spanish, Arabic, Mon-Khmer, Vietnamese, French, and Italian. A one-time baker to the late King Hussein of Jordan sells pistachio-filled pastries on Newbury Street, and the Vice Consul of the Dominican Republic in Boston has a restaurant on Essex Street. But more than all these things, it is the people that give the City its stubborn and compelling vitality. As Bray reminds us:

An undue emphasis on the functional aspects of cheap labor for global capitalism reduces our ability to grasp the reality of immigrant communities and how they can develop and succeed within constraining economic circumstances. They are not simply caught in the currents of labor and capital flows but are able to maneuver themselves through these flows to their own benefit. Within the nooks and crannies of transnational capitalism's dominance, many individuals expand and achieve… (Bray, 1987:168).

The next two chapters follow Dominican immigrants to the City as they maneuver through these flows. As Piore (1979) so eloquently reminds us, labor is not a commodity; income differentials and other comparisons between places are important, but migration, like work itself, is a socially embedded process. In Dominican migration in particular, the importance of family ties and of the family reunification provision of the 1965 immigration laws is paramount. For instance, of the 39,604 Dominicans legally admitted to the U.S. in 1996, 19,355 (49%) were family-sponsored preferences and 19,832 (50%) were immediate relatives of U.S. citizens².

Transcending Borders

As much of the recent scholarship on Dominican immigrant communities has argued that one of their defining characteristics is a “transnational” orientation, we shall begin by providing a broad working definition of this term. Guarnizo (1997:287) states that “transnationalism refers to the web of cultural, social, economic, and political relationships, practices, and identities built by migrants across national borders.” In a variation on this theme, Itzigsohn et al. (1999:317) refer to a “transnational social field… of interactions and exchanges that transcend political and geographical boundaries of one nation and have become the relevant field of action and reference

¹(Hannerz, 1996:29).
²INS Statistical Yearbook, 1996.
for a large number of Dominicans in their country of origin and in the broad diaspora it has generated.” Sutton (1992:231) argues that “rather than becoming hyphenated Americans, [Caribbean immigrants] operate with a transnational dual-place identity.”

These transnational ties are important because they have implications not only for the migrants themselves, but also for both the places they come from and the places they enter. Dominican immigrants to the United States come from a country that has in many ways already experienced significant Westernization—not to mention a culture that grew out of substantial racial and ethnic intermingling—and this process has been facilitated by continuous migration and return, which brings American fashions, social norms, and consumption patterns back to the island. Furthermore, as Hannerz (1996:77) notes, “newcomers to the center... are already creolized when they arrive, and they can be seen to be further creolized through their engagements... in their new surroundings. But the natives are also frequently, in some way, and to a lesser extent probably, creolized: the periphery is speaking back.” What happens when the periphery does speak back? What are the changes that take place in local communities?

Stepping Back
To place these questions in a larger context: in 1910, immigrants (the “foreign-born”) constituted nearly 15% of the U.S. population. By the late 1960s, that share had declined to under 5%, but has been steadily increasing over the last three decades. Moreover, by the year 2010, it is predicted that Latinos will overtake African-Americans as the largest minority group in the U.S., and Latinos are also on track to become either the majority or majority-minority group in a number of major U.S. cities, including Los Angeles, New York, and Miami.

The enormity of this shift becomes even clearer when we realize that, for example, as many as 7.5% of Dominican-born people reside in the U.S., and there are more Dominicans in New York than in most cities in the Dominican Republic. Insofar as migration can actually worsen conditions in sending countries (or mitigate conditions that might otherwise lead to advocacy for structural change) (Piore, 1979; Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991; Ferran and Pessar, 1991), and this

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3 Although it remains a racially stratified society, with the upper classes tending to be lighter-skinned. (Black, Betances, Haggerty).
4 Passel, 1992. Note that the category of “Latinos” represents a dizzying array of ethnic/racial groups/ancestry and cultures, although it basically refers to Spanish-speaking people from Central and South America and the Caribbean.
worsening can become one of a number of spurs to further migration, it doesn’t appear that this trend will slacken anytime soon (barring drastic policy changes). Furthermore, as transnational practices have been noted in a variety of other large immigrant groups, including Mexicans, Salvadoreans, Haitians, Jamaicans, Indians, and Filipinos (Guarnizo, 1997), it is useful to understand the practices of such a large and continuing influx of new Americans and to what extent they constitute the periphery creolizing the center, as it were.

**The Old and the New**

Amid all the sometimes ecstatic talk of transnationalism, with its chic postmodern overtones of pastiche, impurity, and hybridization, few authors would dispute the proposition that transnational practices are nearly as old as immigration itself. What many authors might argue, however, is that the novelty of this discussion inheres in two levels of inquiry: 1) the use of transnationalism as “an emerging theoretical perspective” that reconceptualizes im/migrant experiences within, and impacts on, sending and receiving (however tangled those positions might become!) societies; and 2) an exploration of the particular technological and economic changes that provide the context for migrant adaptations in this historical moment.

Both of these levels of inquiry certainly have led us to critical new insights about immigrant communities—and will continue to do so. Before we continue, however, I’d like to try and articulate a peculiarity I find interesting about this endeavor. It goes something like this: As a relatively new way of conceptualizing immigration (in contrast to the enduring practices themselves), a complex idea of transnationalism has not yet entered mainstream American thinking or dominant discourses about immigration, except insofar as more settled populations (the product of that percentage of past groups who elected to stay, as it were) complain about the “transience” of newcomers. Although many Dominican immigrants may be engaging in a variety of transnational practices as a perfectly logical response to the social and economic imperatives of their lives, they are still contending with and responding to widely disseminated American ideals of settlement and assimilation. These ideals may be mythical, but they affect how people perceive and live their lives. Thus, some of the Dominicans I talked with in Lawrence expressed perspectives on their experience that placed less emphasis on continuing ties to the island than on their struggles to adjust to life in the United States. Because of the contacts I selected and that self-selected me to talk with, this observation may not be widely applicable; nevertheless, it seems important to mention. In a variation on this theme, one person I spoke with told me, “We are living here, we are working here, we are dying here, we are giving birth here; don’t compare us to how it is back there—compare us to other groups here.” But is this what most Dominicans are comparing themselves to?

**Caveat**

The fact that this study is not itself a transnational one—that is, I conducted no primary research with people in the Dominican Republic—represents an important limitation to this discussion. In this sense, the story I tell is doubtless more influenced by the City than the Island, for the City is the world in which my contacts were, for the most part, living their daily lives. However symbolically interpenetrated the two sites may be, few living in Lawrence would mistake it for a City in the Dominican Republic.

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6 See Guarnizo (1997:284-5) for detailed references.
7 Discussion with Ramona Hernandez, 4/28/99.
CHAPTER THREE
ACTIVITIES

But First--Some Words About Numbers
It is difficult to say precisely how many Dominicans are in Lawrence. The Current Population Survey's estimate of the number of Dominicans in Massachusetts has ranged from 23,000 in 1994 down to 20,000 in 1995, dropping precipitously to 5,000 in 1996 (a number obviously wildly inaccurate; there were probably twice that many Dominicans in Lawrence alone that year). A 3/12/99 article by the Lawrence Eagle-Tribune pointed out that while the Commonwealth government estimates 30,000 Dominicans in Massachusetts, the Dominican Consulate in Boston claims that there are over 100,000 Dominicans here.

INS numbers are counts and thus more reliable—although they do not account for the return flow of migrants, or capture the numbers of undocumented entrants, which may be substantial. Indeed, the official INS 1996 estimate of 50,000 undocumented Dominicans in the whole U.S. seems a trifle conservative. In 1996, 1,928 Dominicans admitted listed the Boston-Lawrence-Lowell-Brockton Metropolitan Statistical Area as their intended residence1. It is, however, difficult to extrapolate from a single year, or to tell how many of those people are bound for Lawrence. As the City has traditionally been a secondary settlement for those moving from New York, many new arrivals also will not appear in INS statistics.

Table 3.1: Latinos in Lawrence and Massachusetts, 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Massachusetts</th>
<th>Lawrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth Rate, 1980-90</td>
<td>104%</td>
<td>184%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty Rate, 1989</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican as % of Latinos</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of MA Latinos, 1990</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of MA Dominicans</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Rivera, 1993 and U.S. Census, 1990

1990 Census data, outdated as it may be, probably represents our best baseline, although the Census is notorious for undercounting minority and immigrant populations. Population projections (see Introduction, note 2) indicate

Table 3.2 indicates the enduring political elements of the Dominican migration to the United States.

Table 3.2
Dominican Migration to the U.S., 1981-1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Dominican Migration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>18,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>17,451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>22,058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>23,147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>23,787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>26,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>24,858</td>
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<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>27,189</td>
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<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>26,723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>42,195</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>41,405</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>41,969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>45,420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>51,189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>38,512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>39,604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>27,053</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Years in Bold are Election Years
Adapted from Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991, & INS Statistical Yearbook, 1996

1 This was the second-highest mainland U.S. destination behind New York.
Latinos comprise 50%-70% of the total population. Most observers also believe that Dominicans now equal or outnumber Puerto Ricans in the City. It thus seems reasonable to estimate that there are currently around 20,000 Dominicans in Lawrence.

I. TRANSNATIONALISTS

Immigrants to US cities... modify the social and cultural geographies of the places in which they live and work (Laws, 1997).²

The stereotype of “transience,” freely applied to the Dominican population in Lawrence by some of the older residents of the City, is striking not only for its dismissal of communities critical to the economic and cultural vitality of the City, but also for its superficial understanding of the complex ties that Dominican individuals and families have forged between the Island and the City. Dominicans in Lawrence do remain intimately connected to their country of origin. Many own property on the Island, vote there, send their children back for discipline, and visit quite often. However, Dominicans are also very much present in the life of the City, from the recent Dominican-Puerto-Rican voting coalition that ousted Paul Ianucillo and installed Jose Santiago as the Massachusetts state representative from Lawrence, to the considerable presence of Dominican children in the City’s public schools and Dominican workers in the City’s factories, to the plethora of small Dominican-owned businesses that dot the streets of North Lawrence neighborhoods—some of which draw in Latinos from around the region.

The Spectrum of Involvement

In exploring some of the ways that Dominicans are working and living and adapting to life in the City, as well as the extent to which they are linked to life on the Island, it will be helpful to refer to Itzigsohn, et al.’s formulation of narrow

² In Chapter Five I will return to some of the broader discussions around transnationalism and how it represents a continuity with and an evolution from past immigrant practices. However, it seems to me that the point is not so much whether immigrants have always done these things—except insofar as we use that historical realization to fight existing prejudices—but understanding how, and in what context, people are living their lives, and how that opens or constrains opportunities for individual and community empowerment.

³ And Puerto Rican (usually lumped together as “the Spanish”).

My life as an immigrant is in such a way very phony.
Because when I came here I was thinking that as a civil engineer, as an English-speaker, it would be nice for me and smooth to get a position as an engineer and then I dreamed about living in an Anglo community or neighborhood, maybe in a twelfth, thirteenth, or fourteenth floor in an apartment, to do my job working with a big company making steel buildings, a bridge and everything. And living with American people, eating American food... What is happening is that I am still living in a Spanish community, eating my same food... and dealing mainly with Spanish people.⁴

⁴ Interview, 2/11/99 (Male, 50s, teacher, 12 years in the City).
and broad transnational practices. As they note, “many Dominicans have a deep involvement in these links and exchanges, whereas others participate in them only occasionally. Some members of this transnational community engage in economic exchanges; some are part of its political links; others only experience the transnational field in a symbolic way, as part of their space of meaningful references” (1997:317). The extent to which each of this practices can be considered narrow (i.e., more intense and focused) or broad (i.e., more informal, sporadic, and diffused) depends on the degree of institutionalization of the practices, the level of involvement of people, and the regularity of movement between places (p.323). In addition to existing along a narrow to broad continuum, these practices can be economic, political, civic, social, and cultural (p.324); and while these categories are of course embedded in each other, and often overlap significantly, the framework they provide is useful.

Two qualifications (one liberatory, one cautionary): 1) participation in these transnational exchanges (which can be as focused as a “hometown association,” or as broad as reading a daily national newspaper of the Island) is in no way necessarily exclusive of participation in purely “local” activities, and in some cases may catalyze it; 2) the mere fact of these activities “transcending” physical borders does not mean that they also transcend asymmetries of class, race, gender, power, which are themselves culturally transmitted and thus easily can be extended or reinforced through these practices.

Arrival: The Importance of Family Ties and Social Networks
The first Dominicans did not come to Lawrence straight from the Island but migrated up from New York. The story of Alma, a young woman who was born in the U.S. and raised on the Island, is in some ways paradigmatic of the early Dominican migration to the City. Her parents, of “humble background,” emigrated from the Dominican Republic in the early 1960s after Trujillo died. They came first to New York, rapidly followed by a large circle of extended family and friends in what Alma described as “the domino effect.” In the late 1960s one member of the circle came up to Lawrence following rumors of work, and soon the rest followed; local industries were paying “headhunter fees” to those who

La Cadena

Un familiar... se estableció... porque Lawrence tenía mucha industria [y] hacia conexión con [otros] y lo traía para acá y así venían: todos uno detrás de otro porque sabían que aquí estaban las condiciones de trabajo y de vivienda.5

Todo eso ocurre porque hay un familiar, un pariente que emigra, que viene a este país, pasa muchísimos trabajos, aprende tal vez a hablar un poquito el inglés o lo que fuere, o se adapta en una factoría donde le permitieron o donde se hablaba más español y ha durado diez, doce, veinte años en esa factoría... Esa persona viene y comienza a traer a su hijo, a su hija, y si están casados, esas personas van a traer a sus esposas, y se va creando una cadena donde siempre el primero va a pasar más trabajos que los demás.6

5 Interview, 2/17/99 (Man, 40s, former doctor, here 5 years).
6 Interview, 3/5/99 (Man, 40s, union member, Malden Mills).
brought in new workers (at this point the going rate was about $25, according to several interviewees). Most members of the circle (male and female) worked in factory jobs, sewing shoes and coats. In the late 1970s many of them began moving into electronics firms such as Raytheon, Lucent, and Western Electric, which Alma described as “the elite of immigrant working class” jobs. Although her parents never made more than $8 or $9 an hour, they saved enough to buy a triple decker in Lawrence, and they made regular biannual visits to the Island. Their ultimate objective was to save enough money to buy property on the Island as well, and to get the children back there as soon as possible; America was seen as a dangerous place to raise a family. In 1980 they bought a house in the DR and moved back, although this was not true of the entire circle of family and friends, some of whom are still living in the City. In the late 1980s Alma returned to the area to go to college, and has remained here ever since; she now works in the City’s nonprofit sector. In America, Alma’s family maintained a strong emphasis on Dominican culture. Within the house the family spoke only Spanish and ate Dominican food, and interaction with extended family and friends was frequent and expected. Back on the Island, Alma attended American schools with both Dominican children and those of other nationalities, and immersed herself in American popular culture (a good friend of hers had, as a high school yearbook quote, a line from the Led Zeppelin song *Stairway to Heaven*: “there’s a feeling I get when I look to the west, and my spirit is crying for leaving”). Alma describes her family as “working class here, almost upper-middle class back home.”

Alma’s story—which many will recognize as a classic description of chain migration—is interesting in and of itself, but also because it begins to illustrate the complexity of transnational ties and exchanges that many Dominican immigrants experience. The family’s “narrow” economic practices of saving for and investing in property on the Island were embedded in slightly broader social practices of regular visits home to maintain kin and friendship ties that would facilitate the return move; at the same time, this did not impede purely local economic investment. The intense links the family maintained with Dominican culture while here in the U.S. were mirrored by Alma’s desire for and connection to Western culture once back on the Island. At the same time, Dominican traditions of reliance on extended kin networks facilitated first the extension of opportunity structures across

[My aunt and uncle]... retired. They were so used to travel there just to visit and have a good time that they probably thought that if they go back, it was going to be good all the time... so they went back, they had this big trailer with every possible thing you could imagine, full, every little thing you could think of they had in this trailer, and they bought a house in the Dominican Republic and this house had everything you’d probably need to live a good life. But they had an alarm in the house, so when the alarm went off they didn’t know if it was real or a false alarm. All the things they had, they didn’t know if people wanted to get into their house and kill... after maybe a year-and-a-half or so they decided they were coming back. They packed a trailer again with their stuff, and from the Dominican Republic they sold whatever they could and then came back here. 

7 Interview, 2/12/99 (Man, 40s, here 20+ years, professional).
the ocean to the U.S. for employment, back to the Island for property, and back across again for higher education.

The story of Carlos, a much more recent immigrant to the City, also illustrates the importance of family ties in immigrant settlement patterns. At the time he left the Dominican Republic (in 1998), Carlos held degrees in social science, political science, and social psychology (the youngest of five brothers, he was the only one in his family who had the opportunity to go to University). All of his brothers were already in the U.S. (one still in New York, three having moved to Lawrence)\(^8\). Although Carlos was reluctant to leave the Island, being heavily emotionally and intellectually invested in his teaching work there, his lack of political connections greatly constrained his opportunities not only to advance professionally but also simply to support his family, and in the end he felt forced to emigrate (his wife and three children followed a month later, once he got settled; the whole family had been saving money against this eventuality for years). Once here he connected through family with a local temporary agency well-known in the Latino communities, and has spent the last year working at various factories in the region and taking English classes at a school near his house.

For many migrants, social networks are overlaid like so many ligaments and tendons on the bare bones of economic necessity; they are what makes movement possible. In Carlos’ case, his lack of knowledge of English (a common barrier), combined with the fact that most professional credentials do not transfer to the U.S. context, made the existence of a kin system especially important. While Carlos’ current economic situation does not permit regular travel to the Island (the same $8 an hour doesn’t go as far as it used to), he defines himself very strongly as a member of the Dominican diaspora (something Itzigsohn et al. define as a broad transnational practice), feeling himself almost in exile here. Although somewhat reserved, he takes great pleasure in sharing elements of his culture with North American friends, and he keeps well abreast of political and cultural developments on the Island.

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\(^8\) His brothers, like Alma’s relatives 20 years ago, have also received “commissions” for referral of new employees.

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\(^9\) Interview, 3/8/99 (Male, 40s, factory worker, former prof.).
Transnational Economic Activity

While my research did not uncover any large-scale transnational capitalists in Lawrence (people directly involved in formal businesses in both countries—see Portes and Guarnizo, 1991; Guarnizo, 1994; Itzigsohn, 1997), I would venture to say this is not because they do not exist. I did, however, find evidence of a variety of transnational economic activity beyond the commonplace remittances that many (but not all) of my interviewees send to family back home.

Ramon came over with his extended family (straight to Lawrence via an uncle already settled here) in the late 1970s. He estimates that close to 100 of his direct relatives—aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, and numerous cousins—are currently here in the City. His family members have worked in factories and professional jobs, as well as owning small businesses. One of his entrepreneurial aunts operated a clothing business in which she would buy the latest American fashions in the City or in New York and sell them in the Dominican Republic, traveling regularly between places to transact her business. Many of his other relatives own property or houses on the Island, and two uncles have since moved back. He himself (currently a professional) has been back at least twice a year, and is planning on eventually moving back with his wife (perhaps not permanently), taking advantage of her professional contacts to develop Internet-related business opportunities.

Ramon’s aunt is an example of the way that fairly narrow transnational economic practices can have broad transnational cultural effects, as she participates in a process of cultural diffusion that brings American fashion, on an informal and personal but highly effective level, to the Island.

Milagros, a small business owner in the City (who is also an officer of the local Latino merchants association), tells a complementary story. While the clientele of her business is local (though she does make purchasing trips to New York), she notes that many of her customers buy clothing and accessories from her not to wear in Lawrence, but to take as gifts for friends and relatives (or outfits for themselves) when they go home to visit, presenting an image of success and prosperity to those who have remained behind. Both my informants and several studies (Itzigsohn, 1997; Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991) have mentioned this phenomenon and the way in which it acts to stimulate further migration by...

El dominicano que viene a este país, y muchos se sacrifican haciendo su economía para cuando van a su país llevar lo mejor que pueden comprar aquí...

porque inclusive yo a través del negocio yo me doy cuenta que la mayoría de los dominicanos siempre están recolectando cosas para cuando van de viaje a su país... A lo mejor no lo disfrutan aquí; se lo llevan a Santo Domingo para disfrutarlo allá. Entonces cuando la gente ve que las personas van de aquí con tantas cosas bonitas, con ropa nueva, prendas, muchos artículos de vestir, sólomente se entusiasman y piensan, qué tan fácil, pero no saben todo el sacrificio que han hecho esas personas para ellos poder llevar eso allá. Entonces ahí la persona se engaña e inventan que aquí hay de todo, que se consiguen las cosas fácil...

10 Interview, 2/17/99 (Woman, business owner, her 16 years).
portraying an overly optimistic picture of the riches to be had in the land of milk and honey.

**Politics Without Borders?**

One of the signs of a developing “transnational political sphere” is the fact that Lawrence has joined many New York neighborhoods as a required fundraising and campaign stop for political candidates from the Island. In tracing the rise of this type of activity, Itzigsohn et al. point to the “consolidation of competitive politics during the 1980s and 1990s” in the Dominican Republic (after years of Trujillo’s one-party rule and numerous less stable parties), which “generated a need for political fundraising” (1997:320). They (and others) also mention the encouragement of current Dominican President Leonel Fernandez, himself a return migrant who lived and received his education in New York (and who has urged Dominicans abroad to involve themselves politically in both places), and the acknowledgement of dual citizenship by the Dominican government in 1994 as other contributing factors.

Two of the major Dominican parties, the Partido Revolucionario (PRD) and the Partido de la Liberacion (PLD) have facilities in the City that serve not only as a headquarters for political activity but also as social centers for members (the PRD even has tables set up for playing dominoes). Two of my informants had relatives that were “narrowly” involved in Dominican politics, at times traveling to the Island; one interviewee noted, “my youngest sister is part of the political party. She got that from my father. She’s very active in the PRD. She’s so involved that she’s there this week.” Others were involved in PRD activities here but did not travel to the Island for political purposes. Most PRD members whom I spoke with in Lawrence indicated that they did not get involved in City politics; they believed “no vale la pena” (it isn’t worth the trouble) and little substantial benefit for themselves or their families would arise from it. As Hardy-Fanta (1993:178-9) found in interviewing Dominican women in Boston that the “tepid” U.S. political atmosphere was a

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11 Some of my interviewees expressed quite a bit of skepticism and disillusionment with Fernandez, who they indicated has merely followed the hallowed tradition of Dominican leaders in enriching himself and his friends at the country’s expense, in spite of his fine words. One person also cautioned against seeing the fundraising activity that goes on here as true political involvement, arguing that it is driven much more by candidates’ need for American dollars than participants’ deeper understanding of the issues.

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12 Interview, 4/8/99 (Female, 40s, here 13 years, nonprofit staff).
poor substitute for the “vibrant political life” of the Island with its tangible consequences and distinctly personal, social elements, it seems that even Dominicans escaping from the uneven results of the political patronage system back home continue to use it as a political frame of reference.

On the other hand, Dominican political activity can help catalyze involvement here, as we see in the case of Silvestre, an older man who had participated in the 1965 Civil War in the Dominican Republic as a Constitutionalist. He moved to Lawrence in 1978 as part of his work for the New York branch of the PRD, campaigning on behalf of then-candidate Antonio Guzman. In his twenty-one years in the City he has since thrown his energy into campaigns for Ted Kennedy, Marty Meehan (the Democratic U.S. Congressman from the Lawrence district), and the current Mayor of Lawrence.

**Civil Society and Transatlantic Obligations**

In addition to their transnational economic and political activity, “Dominicans stick together when the need arises.” The hurricane which ravaged the Island (and other parts of the Caribbean and Central America) late last summer elicited an immediate, widespread, collective response from Dominicans in the City. A number of prominent City businesspeople and community leaders used their organizations as the focal points for a massive collection of money and resources (food, clothing, water, blankets, first-aid supplies) which were then distributed through similar networks and personal contacts on the Island. This extra effort joined a much more modest but regular flow of resources toward the Island, as Dominicans in the City routinely collect gifts for poor children at Christmas time and sponsor the educational costs of children who otherwise could not afford to attend school.

Levitt (1998) has also examined the role of what might be called transnational neighborhood associations-cum-community development corporations: “associations created by people from a certain town or region that gather to socialize and to help their town or village” (Itzigsohn, 2997:328). While such an inquiry is beyond the scope of the current effort, there apparently is at least one such association in the City, formed by people from the town of Altamira. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence indicates that many of those from Bonao meet regularly with kin and associates from their

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13 Interview, 4/22/99 (Male, 40s, Business owner, community leader).

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14 Interview, 3/2/99 (Male, 50s, former Constitutionalist).
hometown in the neighboring City of Haverhill, while Lawrence is empty of Banilejos (those from the southern City of Bani) on Sunday as they reunite with family and friends in Boston.

**The Culture Brokers: Travel Agents in Lawrence**

[T]he business of specializing in the problems of immigrant adjustment is [an] early avenue of economic activity, and immigrant-owned travel agencies and law firms as well as realtors and accountants are common in most immigrant communities. Such businesses frequently perform myriad functions far beyond the simple provision of legal aid or travel information and reservations.¹⁵

Travel agencies figure prominently in the physical and symbolic landscape of North Lawrence. As the literal mediators between the Island and the City, it seems only fitting that these businesses (and their owners) often serve as cultural and economic mediators as well, engaging in a variety of both narrow and broad transnational practices; essentially, they are the vehicle for many of the links. Travel agencies in the City are rarely just that; most are also at the least places where one can send remittances home, and sometimes places to ship purchases or gifts, receive mail, call the Island, or purchase beepers or cellular phones. Others combine the travel agency with accounting and insurance services that help new arrivals negotiate the labyrinthine bureaucracy of tax forms and insurance regulations that is often incomprehensible even to natives. These businesses are also places to exchange news or receive advice—as are hair salons, *bodegas* (corner grocery stores), and *botanicas* (dispensers of herbal medicine and religious guidance)—and their social and economic elements tend to reinforce each other, as both Levitt (1993) and Hendricks (1983) have emphasized. Partially because they act as mediators between the two worlds, an activity in which trust and personal relationships are vital, travel agents often occupy a prominent role in the community. One Lawrence travel agent is one of the founders of the Dominican American Voter’s Association, which boasts over 5,000 members and has begun to take a more active role in City politics. Another is a well-respected community leader who was involved in numerous local nonprofit organizations before starting her own business, and

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Oh, yeah, I always go back... There was a time when I had to go there with my husband and my mother was very sick in New York. I felt so bad leaving the country that I was questioning myself why. It was on my way back. Why I felt so sad if my mother, my brothers, my kids were in New York... It was when you are born in a place, you like it, you love it. It doesn't matter how far away you are from it... the country is something that is so tied to you that you cannot put it apart. My grandfather is there, but I have no other close relatives because my close relatives I call my mother, my father, my brothers and sisters. Even though everybody's here, when I go there, when I have to come back I feel like I'm missing something or that I'm leaving something that I like so much... when you're 17, you are aware of what you're leaving behind...¹⁶

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¹⁶ Interview, 4/8/99 (Woman, 40s, teacher, 25 years in the U.S.).
made a heroic but unsuccessful bid for City Council a number of years ago.

Transnationalism vs. Creolization

Discussions about transnational activities can have oddly contradictory elements. For instance, Levitt (1998) points to the way that returning migrants bring with them American cultural knowledge and customs that change food, fashion, business practices, and social norms in the DR, as well as creating a larger knowledge of the world—an intimate knowledge of a Boston neighborhood, e.g.—among Dominican friends or family who may never leave the Island. Guarnizo (1994) has documented the rejection that successful returning migrants eager for social acceptance—the nouveau riche, as it were—experience at the hands of the established Dominican elite, such that in some cases an actual spatial residential segregation has occurred, with migrant neighborhoods springing up in some parts of the capital, Santo Domingo. One view posits a process of cultural creolization that, it could be—and has been—argued, is a continuing element of many Caribbean cultures. The other posits the creation of an altogether different space—a migrant community separate from the economic and cultural mainstream of both Dominican and American societies.

This suggests to me that in addition to Itzigsohn et al.’s formulation of narrow and broad transnational practices, it might be useful to make a distinction between transnational and creole practices, acknowledging at the same time that considerable overlap will exist. This distinction may become clearer by taking a look at the activities of Working Capital, a national micro-enterprise/peer-lending17 program that has one of its most successful operations in Lawrence. Of the nearly 200 active members of the Lawrence program, over 90% are Dominican; many of them are using the program to help initiate and finance very small home-based businesses (such as catering or childcare) that supplement other individual or family income. I would argue that, in effect, Working Capital is a hybrid or creolized form of capitalization and entrepreneurship that mediates between practices such as the san, an informal rotating credit association popular on the

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17 Peer-lending refers to a system whereby interested individuals form a loan group that provides support and advice to members and acts as a loan review committee. Working Capital lends money to the group, which is collectively responsible for repayment though typically only one member at a time uses each loan. The combination of peer support and accountability has proven effective in encouraging high repayment levels.

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18 Interview, 3/5/99 (Woman, early 40s, teacher).
Island (Safa, 1995), as well as the unofficial peer lending groups that are common among Dominicans here and on the Island\textsuperscript{19}, and the more formal system of bank financing with its stricter lending requirements. The program itself does not operate transnationally (though it may allow some members to do so; e.g., one is a clothing business similar to the one described in Ramon’s story above), but instead fuses different cultural elements to help Dominican entrepreneurs succeed in a local American context. The Dominican-dominated Asociacion de Comerciantes Latino-Americanos (Association of Latin American Merchants) also plays this mediating role in the City by administering a line of credit originating through a local bank.

**II. WORKING IN THE CITY**

**A Closer Look at Small Business Activity**

Dominicans, more than any other Latino group in the City, have turned to small and micro-businesses to supplement their income or make a living in Lawrence. A recent survey by the Merrimack Valley Catholic Charities organization found that nearly half of the City’s small businesses were Dominican-owned (this figure does not even include home-based businesses, which were not surveyed). Indeed, Dominicans had three times as many businesses as the next largest group (identified as “Americans”). While not all these entrepreneurs are part of the informal sector—indeed, a great many operate squarely in the middle of the business mainstream—there is an informal element to the enterprise: fully 82\% (of all businesses surveyed) were operating without a business license, and most indicated little awareness and less utilization of either private or public institutional resources such as bank loans, façade improvement grants, and technical assistance services. Moreover, the business owners I interviewed all got their start informally, providing services to family, friends, and co-workers.

The fact that the survey data regarding other characteristics were not disaggregated by ethnic group hampers extensive inference-making; for instance, based on my knowledge of both the Working Capital Program and the small business community in North Lawrence, I would say that the rate of male proprietorship may be closer to 2/3 than ¾. In addition,\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{19} Personal communication, Working Capital Program Manager, March, 1999.
within the Dominican business community the rate of employment of family members is probably much higher than 67%, considering the extent to which Dominicans in the City rely on family networks; all of the business owners I interviewed (and many others in the neighborhood in which I work) have family members working for them.

Access and Context
As Waldinger (1990) notes, immigrant entrepreneurship is shaped by access to business opportunities (within a particular place), immigrant group characteristics, and the specific historical conditions within which immigrant groups arrive and settle. In the wake of white flight and retail abandonment, Dominican businesses have also moved into underserved markets and empty spaces in the City. In the North Common neighborhood (which still hosts a small cluster of Italian-owned businesses), many bodegas occupy the same retail spaces that small Italian grocery stores did decades ago; on downtown Essex Street, small clothing retailers have proliferated around a closed department store. The critical mass not only of Dominicans but also of Puerto Ricans in the City forms a ready market for the neighborhood bodegas, which adapt themselves more readily to the available space and specific tastes in neighborhoods than large-scale supermarkets (establishments that have traditionally been wary of locating in poor and minority neighborhoods).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.3: Occupations of Admitted Immigrants, 1996</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dominican</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Admitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declared Occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional/Specialty/Technical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive/ Administrative/ Managerial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precision Production/ Craft/ Repair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operators/ Fabricators/ Laborers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming/ Forestry/ Fishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: INS Statistical Yearbook, 1996

The blocked mobility that many Dominicans in the City experience, partially as a result of labor market conditions and

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20 Combined with, as Waldinger points out, the self-selection of the less risk averse as immigrants in the first place.

21 Interview, 3/9/99 (Male, late 40s, teacher, former doctor).
language barriers, may also act as a spur to entrepreneurship. Many studies of Dominican immigration to the U.S. indicate that migrants (contrary to popular U.S. stereotypes) tend to have higher education and skill levels, and more financial resources, than the average non-migrant remaining in the Dominican Republic (Grasmuck & Pessar, 1991, others). While Table 3.4 suggests (at least broadly) that business ownership may be linked to higher levels of education (perhaps received abroad), the story of Milagros, a local business owner, is more illustrative. Trained as an accountant in the DR, she came to Lawrence sixteen years ago to visit family following the separation from her first husband. Once she decided to stay, Milagros, who at that point did not speak any English, worked in a local shoe factory and did sewing on the side until she was able to open her own retail clothing business (which recently celebrated its ten-year anniversary). Although her experience in the factory was in many ways a positive one—her employers provided help and encouragement in learning English—she saw entrepreneurship as a the most viable escape from the drudgery of factory work. And as Milagros pointed out, “Having a business is also a vocation. Not everyone has the ability to manage a business. It is like an art. Not everybody will dedicate themselves to making it happen” [my emphasis]—a incisive reminder of the individual factors that shape each immigrant’s experience.

Table 3.4 Education Levels in Lawrence: Small Business Owners vs. General Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than HS</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Degree</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Training</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters or Higher</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It is also possible that much of the entrepreneurial activity of Dominican Lawrentians draws upon a recent tradition of coping with economic informalization in the Dominican Republic. Ironically, given the fluctuating nature of low-wage labor demand in the Lawrence region, which is characteristic of the “peripheralization of the core” I discussed in Chapter Two, it is little wonder that similar strategies have emerged in both places. Although Waldinger (1990) notes

22 I cannot stress this enough, in the face of both the generalizations required by scholarly/ policy research and the way that popular stereotypes of immigrant and minority groups flatten our perception and understanding of members of these groups.

23 Please note that it is beyond the scope of this study to enter into the debate on just how entrepreneurial Dominicans really are. While some authors (Borjas, Waldinger) have indicated that Dominicans have low levels of entrepreneurship relative to other immigrants such as Koreans or Jamaicans (and sometimes even relative to the native population), others (Portes, Guarnizo, Levitt) have commented on the Dominican-owned businesses that abound in any Dominican neighborhood, as they do in Lawrence, and their importance to the community. On another note, Hernandez (1997) has argued that high levels of entrepreneurship do not necessarily translate into better quality of life for entrepreneurs themselves, an important point that deserves consideration.

24 In the wake of the economic changes on the Island described in Chapter One (and the growing rural-to-urban migration), a growing number of Dominicans have turned to informal sector activity (businesses that operate outside the official legal and regulatory framework) such as food vending to households and zona franca workers, homework in the garment industry, and freelance construction work (Safa, 1995; Lozano, 1997).
that this peripheralization often creates self-employment opportunities for immigrants within the core industries themselves (smaller, more flexible firms, staffed by "co-ethnics," subcontract with larger ones to handle the unstable portion of demand), that role seems to be foreclosed by the presence of temporary agencies in Lawrence, which offer regional firms flexible access to the immigrant labor force.

### Table 3.5 Occupational Distributions, Lawrence Workforce (Selected Occupations) 1970-1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latinos as % of Total Workforce</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional, Technical, Managers, Administrators</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino Population</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino as % of Total</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clerical/Sales</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino Population</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino as % of Total</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operatives/Transport/Laborers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino Population</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino as % of Total</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Service/Private Household Workers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino Population</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino as % of Total</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census 1990 and Borges Mendez, 1992

**Upward Mobility?**

While many Dominicans living in the City are employed in the region’s low-wage manufacturing and service sectors, a good number also work in one of the few union shops in town: Malden Mills, the producers of PolarTec™ fleece and the City’s second largest employer. Malden Mills is well known in the City as a source of better-paying and more highly skilled manufacturing jobs, as well as for owner Aaron Feuerstein’s commitment to remaining in the City after a devastating 1994 fire gave him what seemed like the perfect excuse to relocate. However, Malden Mills represents an exception in terms of the employment opportunities open to immigrant workers. Moreover, given the trends in Massachusetts manufacturing discussed in Chapter Two (and the decline in real wages discussed in Carlos’ story above, and evident from many interviews), the prospects for upward mobility certainly seem less likely than they did at the turn of the century, when Cole (1963:121) could write that “[the immigrant] knew that the arrival of new immigrants improved the position of older ones. His own pay might not be much, but he had reason to believe that his son would do better... The longer a person had been in the United States, the higher his earnings.” Table 3.5 above gives us ambivalent evidence in that regard for the Latino population (as data for the Dominican population in particular are not available, I shall have to draw conclusions from the larger category of Latinos). While it is true

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25 Generous tax incentives from the City government eased this decision.
that a greater percentage of the Latino workforce has moved into professional and managerial 
jobs, Latinos have become increasingly disproportionately represented in the laboring and 
service professions. In 1990, Latinos were 34% of the Lawrence workforce, but 52% of all 
laborers—providing more evidence for Borges-Mendez’s assertion that Latinos are heavily used 
in the region’s declining manufacturing sector—and 44% of all service workers. In addition, 
while the percentage of Latinos who are laborers has steadily decreased—no doubt partly due to 
the absolute decline in the number of manufacturing jobs available—the percentage working in 
the service sector, a growing source of different low-wage low-skill jobs, has steadily increased.

Some Conclusions
Portes (1990:28) has noted that “labor economists frequently write as if immigrants have perfect 
information about labor market conditions in the receiving country and adjust their locational 
decisions accordingly… the roots of the locational patterns of immigrants arriving today are 
often found in events that took place earlier in the century.” As we have seen from some of the 
voices and stories in this chapter, this comment could not be more insightful. The pull of existing 
family ties, and the support these ties offer to “strangers in a strange land,” proves absolutely 
essential to location decisions. This pull also interacts with the whole history of the Immigrant 
City, made manifest in its industrial structure and response to a changing economic order, to both 
create and constrain opportunities for new arrivals. In this chapter we have seen some of the 
ways in which Dominican immigrants adapt to this environment through their involvement in a 
variety of social and economic activities. In the next chapter I will take a step back from the 
activities to listen to some of the attitudes behind them.
Attitudes is a word that encompasses both feelings and perspectives. As this thesis argues that it is by looking and listening more carefully to the feelings and perspectives of certain community members that we discover habits and resources that can be adapted for the benefit of the community as a whole, it becomes crucial to explore these attitudes. Thus, this Chapter is an attempt to look beyond simply what people are doing in order to understand why they are doing it (i.e., what does it mean to them? What is their frame of reference? How are they understanding and contextualizing their actions?), and how they feel about what they are doing and experiencing. In the following pages you will find people’s thoughts on a range of topics, including family life, discrimination, the American dream, the dream of returning, the language barrier, and the acculturation process.

Against the Myths of Totality and Assimilation
Again, I feel compelled to remind the reader that the information in these pages is in no way a complete portrait of the Dominican community in Lawrence. It is rather an attempt to pay attention, as Ramos (1983:379) suggests, “to the ways people, as particular persons with particular histories, use their common-sense reasoning to develop methods for structuring and managing their everyday lives.” In the bulk of this document I have avoided using the paradigm of “assimilation” to frame Dominican experiences because I believe it offers a flat, either/or perspective on cultural adaptation that has little to do with the ways in which Dominicans in Lawrence live (and this Chapter will provide further evidence of that). In making a similarly passionate argument in the case of Mexican-Americans, against cultural reductionism and the charge to assimilate, Ramos remarks (1983:381):

Never does the social scientist consider the possibility that a given Mexican American urban migrant’s conflict may be the result of his being fat and having a large red nose... implicit in [the] recommendation to conform [to the dominant Anglo culture] is the idea that Anglos do not experience any cultural conflict.

Emigrant’s Song
Do not yearn Emigrant
for the way back
nor the fear
neither think sadly
nor your land
nest in your heart.
do not let the doubt
about your land
nor your home.
until one day
looking for your memories
you may return home
even though time
has turned them
only into dreams.

Jose R. Garcia
Lawrence, MA
December 1987
Indeed they do! Psychiatrists and psychologists make their living from it.

Thus, much of the older migration literature around assimilation boxes the immigrant neatly into a paradox: on one hand, recommending assimilation as the only way to succeed and overcome drastically curtailed opportunities, while on the other hand arguing that attempts to assimilate, which are portrayed as necessarily involving a rejection of the old culture, doom one to marginal status in both cultures. Moreover, as one observer has asked, “Assimilation to what? Where is this ubiquity called American society and how can the immigrant identify and use it as a model?”

The assimilationist paradigm ignores the multiplicity of interactions within and around an ethnic community, among recent arrivals, those born here, and long-time residents. It also ignores the multiple frames of reference within which immigrants operate—the way, for instance, that the “world of everyday life” for many Dominicans is both a transnational and a creolized one, encompassing people, events, institutions, and places on the Island as well as in the City (as we saw in Chapter Three). An engagement with “the practical circumstances of people’s everyday lives” (Ramos, 1983:383) allows us to glimpse the heterogeneity of the Dominican community, while realizing and struggling against the constant flattening effect of popular stereotypes. It may be fashionable now to celebrate the “liminal spaces,” in which immigrants negotiate “at the margins” between two (or more) cultures (which are themselves an impure mixture of different myths and realities). However, I would argue that in a sense there is nothing marginal about Dominican transnational and creole practices; they represent a varied and perfectly logical strategy at the center of the common-sense reality in which many Dominicans operate.

**Intergenerational Change**

In our attention to the details of daily life we also need to be cognizant of the larger social structures that impose or promote or attach meanings to those details. For instance, Ramos may argue that, “Mexican immigrants are more concerned with the practical circumstances of their everyday lives than with being Anglo or Mexican.” Yet the fact of being one or the other forces you to experience some

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1 Hernandez, Frank (commentator), *Sourcebook on the New Immigration*, p.479.

“A Dominican Female”

I come from a family of really strict parents and they tend to hover a lot and shelter a lot, very overprotective... My father’s really big into discipline, but mainly because his father was like that. My grandfather worked for Trujillo; he was like his right-hand man. That had a big effect on the family... It does affect me, because of the way my father is... he’ll just come out and say, “You come from a Dominican family and Dominican girls don’t do this.”... I’m supposed to live at home until I get married... [but] I need to be completely independent and have some knowledge of self before I jump into any marriage just to leave my house... It’s a lot, a lot of pressure. You’re expected to do certain things just because of where you’re from, and that doesn’t make any sense. I hate it when my father just labels me as a female or labels me as a Dominican female.... [continued]
things at least partly according to these categories. I’d like to turn to the story of Asha, a young Dominican-American woman, to illustrate how some of these categories give rise to tensions between Dominican parents and Dominican-American children.

Asha’s parents left the Dominican Republic after Trujillo was killed. Her paternal grandfather worked for Trujillo and he was killed shortly after the dictator himself. Asha is the eldest of three sisters; she was brought up strictly by her parents, especially her father (who was himself brought up in a military household), with whom she has an ambivalent relationship. Her father has stringent ideas about what it means to be a “Dominican female” and has attempted to hold Asha to certain rules of behavior as a result (to a greater extent than with her younger sisters). Although Asha does not see her world, or her possibilities (in terms of educational achievement, career, or marriage) in such a constrained way, this nevertheless informs her frame of reference; that is, one of the ways she defines herself is against this notion of a proper Dominican female. Moreover, Asha sees her father’s strictness as intimately related to his father—not only his behavior but his profession as part of an authoritarian government. At the same time, she describes her father as having enormous pride in (and being very supportive of) her mother, who works outside the home and has just completed a master’s degree, which complicates the picture of Dominican machismo struggling with American feminism that this story might otherwise suggest.

**Family in Context**

Another way in which the details of daily life intersect with larger social or institutional structures can be seen in the fact that American immigration policy intersects with Dominican cultural traditions of close, extended kin networks (“La familia allá no termina con familia inmediata”) to reinforce the chain migration tendency. This in turn increases the likelihood of permanent settlement, as it encourages immigrants to recreate a familiar community in the new territory (Borjas, 1990; Ueda, 1994). Many interviewees, even those who still expected to return home one day,

I’m like, no, this is the way I feel about it, not because I’m a female but because I’m me. He doesn’t understand that...

I don’t know how to explain it, but it’s like when you’re talking to somebody in a conversation, you forget everything; you forget that you’re a female, you forget that you have legs, it’s just the psychology of it, you’re just an emotion, just talking. But when I’m around him, it’s like I’m conscious of everything around me... He makes me very uncomfortable because I know how he feels about certain things. He makes me feel like a female, he makes me feel like a Dominican female... It’s hard, but I really think that... it’s forced me to be really open-minded, it’s forced me to go out there and prove to myself that I can do certain things and that nothing can really hold me back.  

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2 A regime, moreover, that was deeply involved in a project of national identity consolidation, which suggests interesting connections between state power, gender identities, nationalism, and patriarchal family structures that are way beyond the scope of this thesis.

3 Interview, 3/18/99 (Woman, early 20s, nonprofit staff, second generation).
acknowledged the ambivalent situation this creates, and especially emphasized the role of children in solidifying one’s presence in the City. Immigrants’ reluctance to uproot children’s lives at a time when stability and continuity can be crucial (not to mention the preferences of children themselves) weighed considerably in the stay-or-return decision-making process.

**Snapshot: U.S. Immigrant Admittance Category, 1996**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Dominican</th>
<th>All U.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number</td>
<td>39,604</td>
<td>915,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family-Sponsored Preferences</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate Relative of U.S. Citizen</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment-Based Preferences</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity Program</td>
<td>negligible</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRCA Legalization</td>
<td>negligible</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee/ Asylee</td>
<td>negligible</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>negligible</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: INS Statistical Yearbook, 1996

At the same time, both the expectation of and the desire to stay or return can have a gendered dimension. Grasmuck and Pessar (1991) have documented the differences between the male and female desire to return within many Dominican households, noting that Dominican women are more likely to relish the increased independence work outside the home brings them in the U.S. (although this can become problematic if men do not also contribute to housework), while Dominican men may view this situation as one more uncomfortable cultural upheaval to be corrected upon return. One successful businesswoman commented that, “el hombre dominicano es el que desea más regresar... muchos hombres no quieren que las mujeres trabajan” (“the Dominican man is the one who wants to return more... many men don’t want the women to work”). She herself went back very briefly to the Island in the mid-1970s because her husband wanted to return, but was very unhappy (securing employment as a return migrant was apparently difficult, as employers did not trust that she would remain). They soon returned together. Although Grasmuck and Pessar also discussed the conflict that many Dominican women feel between Dominican and American middle-class gender norms, none of the women I interviewed—most of whom had been working outside the home in the Dominican Republic—expressed the sentiment that they were working “just to help out” their husbands. Indeed, several of the men I interviewed expressed pride in

You come here and you have your children, so if I tell my children that we’re going to go back to Dominican Republic, I can tell you that maybe they say, “oh, yes,” they're going to enjoy it to go back there, but after they're there for a few days they start, “Mommy, when are we going to go back? I'm missing this, I'm missing that. Mommy, the mosquitoes.

Mommy, ... I can’t do this or I can’t get this.”... I don’t know if everybody’s seeing in the same way, but I think first in my children’s life and in my own life. Maybe I don’t like the weather, but I have to live with the weather. But I see my children, how they like when it's snowing. So at the same time that they enjoy, I enjoy seeing them doing that.

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4 Interview, 4/8/99 (Woman, 40s, here 13 years, nonprofit staff).
their wives’ work achievements. One man, who emigrated here with his wife after she lost her job in a changing political administration, noted that his own employment situation had been very good at the time, but “this is not the only thing that counts in the marriage... I have to think about my wife’s life and the way she feels.”

Language is the Bridge
As Roberts (1983:70) points out, “the family is likely to be strongest when the opportunities available in the wider community are most easily accessed by a collective family strategy and by family-based networks.” It is thus important to note that although many aspects of Dominican life in Lawrence—from arrival to employment opportunities—are shaped by participation in these family networks (and thus reinforce them), there are other opportunity structures that mitigate against family cohesion. An example of this would be the language barrier, which is often more easily overcome by children than adults (especially if the child is born here or comes here very young), and thus tends to undermine parental authority. As one respondent phrased it, “cuando los hijos saben inglés y los padres no, los hijos se hacen en no solamente traductores pero también los que hagan decisiones” (“when the children know English and the parents don’t, the children become not only translators but also those who make decisions”). This can become especially problematic in a school situation, when attempts to impose discipline or monitor progress are mediated between mostly Anglo, monolingual English-speaking teachers and monolingual Spanish-speaking Dominican parents by the child him/herself.

La Barrera del Lenguaje
The language barrier is, in the words of one observer, “the tip of the iceberg of the cultural barrier.” For many of my respondents who were monolingual or not yet fluent, this barrier was a source of great preoccupation, and people keenly felt the foreclosure of opportunities that it presented. Indeed, several of my interviews were conducted in the following manner: I would ask questions in Spanish, and my respondent would answer in English, so that we both could practice our skills in a less-than-familiar communication medium. One of my interviewees practiced his English by creating a scrapbook of panels from newspaper comic strips, which he then painstakingly translated in order to familiarize himself.

6 Interview, 3/8/99 (Male, 40s, factory worker, former prof.).
himself with American colloquial expressions. Several respondents also spoke of the importance of watching television\(^7\) in order to accustom their ears to the sound and flow of English, and broaden their vocabularies\(^8\).

The language barrier is one of the main reasons that so many Dominican professionals can be found in the region's manufacturing and service sectors, literally unable to translate their considerable skills and experience into better jobs in this new context. This is a point to which we shall return in Chapter Five; for now we simply emphasize that the situation of these professionals represents not only a "brain drain" from the Dominican Republic, but also a considerable untapped resource for the City of Lawrence.

**Transculturation: Harder Than It Sounds**

Much of the literature on Caribbean and Latino immigrant communities in the United States has emphasized the central role of back-and-forth movement, migration and return, in creating a "dual-place" identity among migrants and engendering a trade in media, fashion, food, music and other cultural products. Many also have argued that Caribbean and Latin American peoples, with their rich genetic and cultural heritage (Spanish, African, indigenous, and other influences)—a product of continuous in-migration from countries around the globe, as well as regular migration within the region—already have a long history of cultural creolization on which to draw when emigrating to and remaking their lives in America, or between America and their countries of origin. However, the fact that such a process of transculturation, as many of my interviewees termed it, was historically highly problematic (in an evils-of-colonialism-and-slavery sort of way) and often remains painful seems to receive less attention.

Consider the story of Dede, a woman who was a teacher in the Dominican Republic and terms herself "*una exiliada familiar*" ("a family exile"), as she came here not for political or economic reasons (she had a house and a secure job on the Island), but because all of her family in the Dominican Republic had died and her husband was living in the States.

---

\(^7\) May my father forgive me for endorsing such a sentiment.

\(^8\) One of my favorite television-practicing moments occurred when I visited the house of a female interviewee with several colleagues; they proceeded to discuss politics together at the kitchen table while I watched telenovelas (evening soap operas) with her husband in the living room.

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\(^9\) Interview, 2/11/99 (Male, 50s, teacher, 12 years in the City).
Dede recounts that when she first arrived, not knowing the language, the laws, and the rules (and being unused to depending on her husband economically), it was extremely difficult for her; she went a year and a half without working, and was very depressed. Although she is now working as a teacher, she half-laughingly compares the United States to a cancer that is difficult to extinguish once it has entered your body—a painful metaphor. While she remains homesick for the DR after years in the City, she does not feel that she would be able to live there after becoming used to a basic level of material convenience here, and this is a distressing tension for her, though she accepts it as part of life: “Queremos hacer nuestro mundo solo pero poniendo de las dos partes pero muchas veces ponemos partes que no nos convienen y las integramos; entonces lo que nos provoca es un caos... Es parte de la vida del Dominicano.” (We want to make our one world taking from the two parts, but many times we take parts that do not belong together and try to integrate them; then what this provokes in us is chaos... It is part of the life of a Dominican).

Many other first-generation immigrants (the vast majority of my interviewees) expressed similar sentiments. Alma, whose story we first heard in Chapter Three, commented, “cultural schizophrenics—that’s what we are,” but also pointed out that this can be both positive and negative. For her it is positive in the sense that she feels she has two cultures on which to draw in negotiating through the world: she considers herself Dominican in her sense of self-respect and the importance of extended family connections in her life, but American in her openness to new ideas, independence, and unwillingness to conform. On the negative side, cultural schizophrenia also implies a dualism in how other people react to you, both in the City and on the Island. Several people indicated that many Dominicans on the Island view you through the lens of the “Guaguacanari Complex” we read about in Chapter One—that you have sold out or surrendered a part of yourself in order to advance; many Americans view you as strangers; in the meantime you are living here and longing for a home that can often function as an idealized embodiment of what

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10 We’re talking running water and steady electricity, not luxuries; as another interviewee put it, “Yo vine aquí porque estaba cansado de que la luz se me fuera y no había agua para bañarme... yo me voy para Estados Unidos que allá hay mucha agua y mucha luz.” (I came here because I was tired of the lights going off and there not being water to bathe... I came to the U.S. because there is a lot of water and a lot of light.)

11 Interview, 3/5/99 (Woman, early 40s, teacher).
your life here lacks. As another interviewee phrased it: “tu no eres ni de aquí ni de allá... presente en cuerpo pero no en espíritu” (“you are not from here or from there... present in body but not in spirit”). To a certain extent, however, the experience of this duality is individually mediated; it also depends on the length of time in the U.S. and the conditions accompanying emigration. Several of those who had been in the States for many years—and they or their parents had come for political reasons—felt less torn; as one older man, a former Constitutionalist, put it, “no tiene que escoger; puede ser los dos—dominicano y americano” (“you don’t have to choose, you can be both, Dominican and American”).

Double Dreaming

Las personas que están en Santo Domingo, la esperanza de ellos es venir a este país... ellos sueñan con venir a este país... dejan carreras, dejan todo por venir aquí... el gran sueño americano; el gran sueño dominicano, diría yo, es venir a Estados Unidos. (People in the Dominican Republic, their great hope is to come to this country, they dream of coming; they leave careers, leave everything to come here... the great American Dream—the great Dominican Dream, I would say, is to come to the United States.)

One of my most striking findings was the persistence of this archetype of the American Dream in the narratives of my interviewees. Not only does this dream persist, but it plays out for Dominicans in much the same way as it has for generations of immigrants before them, as people come face to face with the enduring difference between dream and reality and the typical immigrant realization that the streets are not, in fact, paved with gold. In the Dominican context the dream is given more apparent substance by returning or visiting migrants who load up with presents and material goods to give or show off to family and friends back home, not to mention the television and film images that increasingly permeate life on the Island. Ironically, these images often reach people because a relative in the States has provided a television and a generator to power it.

A moment from Miranda’s story is characteristic of this moment of realization. She came first to Salem (MA) with

20 years ago... not everyone can afford to travel, and not being educated, coming from the rural places, way back into the country, people didn’t know about traveling.

What will generate the interest of people to travel if they don’t know about travel?

Nowadays you go to the Dominican Republic and you see a house that has broken windows, broken doors, but they have a color TV in there.

The reason is, they probably have a friend or relative here who brought a TV. Things are more exposed today.

People could see things and say “I've got to travel there, I'm going to try to go to this place”... I don’t know if the way things are in the Dominican Republic are so hard for some people that they say, "If it's going to be hard for me here, and I have to go over to the States and maybe have no documents, but still I will have a life, a so-called life.”

12 Interview, 3/1/99 (Man, 50s former Constitutionalist).
13 Interview, 2/17/99 (Woman, 40s, business owner, her 16 years).
14 Interview, 2/12/99 (Man, 40s, here 20+ years, professional).
one of her sisters in 1969, petitioned in by her father (who came as a political emigrant to New York first in 1962). As Miranda recalls, “You feel like you’ll be rich, like you’ll have everything here. We left everything in the Dominican Republic because my father promised we would have everything here... we arrived and he had an empty apartment. The next day we went to a pawn shop to get furniture.”

As Hannerz (1996:101) astutely points out, people “migrate to a possible life depicted... but once such a move has been made, that which one left has become another possible life.” The American Dream and the dream of returning (the Island Dream, as it were) are intimately connected opposites—the yin and yang of Dominican immigrant dreaming. In the old country, people dream of the riches to be had in the U.S.; once people get here, the rigors of life in the City (not the least of which is adjustment to a radically different climate) give more intensity to the dream of returning to the Island. Each comes to embody the lack in the other. In this, Dominicans are no different from many other immigrants who believe their sojourn on North American soil is a temporary measure geared towards eventually saving enough—in this case an *economia*—to support a return to a better life at home.

In Chapter Five I will go more deeply into some of the political implications of this double dream, as well as explore how the role of this dream might be in some sense independent of its realization. For now I’d like to briefly touch on a related phenomenon—what Piore (1979:54) has referred to as the disjuncture between what a migrant does for work, here in the City, and his or her social identity, which is essentially located at home, on the Island. Because the Dominican immigration to Lawrence is only in some respects a Piore-type labor migration, this disjuncture does not hold entirely. For one thing, this migration has initiatory and ongoing political elements that complicate im/migrants’ views of the possibility of returning home. For another, the Dominican community in Lawrence has multiple aspects of permanent settlement (growing political activity and homeownership, social clubs, service organizations, a small business community with a developing institutional infrastructure, etc.) that provide a context for identity formation and social life within the City. Finally, the role of family and tendency to re-unite with family members (often by relocating from New York) ensures that most Dominican

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15 Interview, 3/8/99 (Male, 40s, factory worker, former prof.).
migrants are not acting as “purely economic” men and women.

Nevertheless, the Island orientation of many Dominicans does in some sense make it more bearable for them to accept lower-status jobs, at least to begin with. Pedro’s case is a good example. He grew up in a rural area of the Dominican Republic but because of his class background (his father was a land owner and merchant) was able to go the University, where he chose to become a doctor. He has moved back and forth between here and the Island twice now, and hopes to save enough to return permanently next year. When he first came to the States in 1986, he worked in a furniture factory in New Jersey—an experience that he says wasn’t pleasant, but that he views positively, as a learning experience. As a member of the middle class he did not necessarily view this job as a move of upward mobility, but he was able to look at it with some equanimity, some distance, seeing it as a temporary means to an end, separate from his life back home.

*Discrimination*

Piore’s point about this disjuncture is important because it provides a explanation of why many immigrants are willing to take low-status jobs that counters the often implicitly racist assumptions of what immigrant groups are fit to do. While racial discrimination is nothing new for Dominican immigrants—cédulas, or identification cards, on the Island still record the bearer’s racial background through an intricate system of classification refined under Trujillo16, and many of my informants mentioned the racial prejudice against Haitians on the Island17—immigrants are frequently dismayed at the often rigid racial/ethnic categories and meanings embedded in American culture; in a sense, people are unused to feeling discriminated against or looked down upon because they are *Dominican* (or Latino). Many people with whom I talked were quick to point out all that Dominicans contribute to the City—as a labor force, as tax payers, and as a culturally diverse group—and were perturbed by the lack of acceptance and respect their community has received from older residents. For instance, several local groups are currently working with the U.S. Justice Department in an attempt to improve the City’s election practices through the hiring of more Latino poll workers.

16 Interview, 1/28/99.
17 One respondent commented that “Dominicans do work here that Haitians do in the Dominican Republic.”

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*La factoría para mí era horrible, porque yo nunca en mi vida había trabajado ese tipo de trabajo... en mi casa yo trabajaba con papá en el negocio pero era diferente, tú ves. Trabajaba claro en agricultura pero para mí este tipo de cosas yo no había hecho, pero lo veo positivo porque fue una experiencia tú ves, porque la vida es una escuela, y cada actividad que tú realizas es una experiencia más en tu vida... no lo vi negativo, lo vi muy positivo, porque aprendí a hacer los muebles, y aprendí a hacer las cosas en electrónica, las piezas y todas las cosas, entonces eso es algo, es un conocimiento más18.*

18 Interview, 3/9/99 (Male, late 40s, teacher, former doctor).
Ironically, the discrimination faced by Dominicans in the States as newcomers and “strangers” can be echoed by the rejection many returning migrants (successful and otherwise) experience back in the D.R., where their newfound wealth or experience challenges old class hierarchies and cultural norms. One interesting manifestation of this division is that the spatial segregation that characterizes many Dominican (and other immigrant) communities in the U.S. appears to have a counterpoint in Santo Domingo, where “today, urban spatial segregation is drawn not only along class lines... but also according to migration status” as returning migrants, barred from the capital’s old money neighborhoods, have developed their own communities (Guarnizo, 1997).

While the example above may be a strong indication of a separate, transnational migrant community, the lines in Lawrence appear much less clearly drawn. It thus seems more appropriate to keep in mind Itzigsohn et al.’s formulation of narrow and broad transnational practices; as these two chapters have shown, Dominicans in the City engage in a complex array of activities that put them in varying degrees of dialogue with social and economic structures in both nations. It is evident that many Dominicans feel very keenly the penetration of American culture (if such a thing can be said to exist) and norms in their lives long before they leave the Island. In the context of the historical U.S. political and economic presence in the Dominican Republic, it is no wonder that so many Dominicans have this consciousness of “being here because [we] were there” (Sutton, 1998)—or, as one interviewee put it: “¿Sabes porqué tantos dominicanos han venido aquí? Es porque los Estados Unidos han cogido toda la riqueza de nuestro país... somos inmigrantes económicos” (“You know why so many Dominicans have come here? It’s because the United States has taken all the wealth of our country... we are economic immigrants”).

At the same time, immigrants seem less sure of the ways in which Dominican culture might be changing the United States, arguing that it is more difficult for a smaller and weaker country to have a large impact on the superpower to the North. Some interviewees indicated that in comparison to Dominican culture, American society seems much less open and welcoming—of both individuals and traditions that are

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19 In the City the majority of Dominicans are concentrated in North Lawrence, in the Arlington and North Common neighborhoods.
20 Interview, 2/2/99 (Male, 40s, business owner, here 20+ years).
21 Interview, 2/12/99 (Male, 40s, professional).
new. Thus, while people in the Dominican Republic celebrate Thanksgiving and Halloween, and Dominican children await Santa Claus at Christmas, not many in the U.S. are even aware that February 27th is Dominican Independence Day. On the other hand, those interviewees who had been here longer noted the rising prominence of Dominican baseball players and the popularity of merengue outside Dominican circles—while also noting that this was no substitute for political and economic power for Dominicans here. In the next section I will discuss some of the implications of the activities and attitudes here presented for gaining such power.

Inmigrante

He visto los caminos y las huellas del inmigrante,
sus pasos nos empapan de alegría, sueños, y sudor.

En las noches he contemplado las estrellas
y al cielo oscurecer en tinieblas.
Atrás, duermen las palomas mensajeras.

Soy inmigrante como el primero,
quiero caminar por el mundo entero,
sin el vil odio racial que nos separa.

Al inmigrante no le llamen extranjero.
Yo no soy extranjero de este mundo.
El inmigrante vive creciendo.
El universo es su lecho, el verso y alimento.

El inmigrante tiene un amigo, su amigo sonrie,
me abraza, canta, me mira,
y dice...

Sus ojos derraman lágrimas.
Como el rocio en la natura.
Mi vida está aquí y las raíces en mi país,
otros esperan al inmigrante primero,
en caminos y praderas alguien les espera,
la bandera es la primera.
El inmigrante y las palomas hoy son mensajeras.

Juan Gabriel
Lawrence, MA
2/2/99
PART THREE: BRIDGES BETWEEN

Immigrants on arriving in Lawrence were usually too weak and disorganized to accomplish much until the end of the first decade, when they managed to found a church. In the second decade a nationality established social clubs, protective societies, cooperative stores, and organizations that cemented ties with the homeland. The third decade produced intellectual achievements such as newspapers, debating circles, and political clubs, while in the fourth and fifth the immigrants began to unite with other societies throughout the state and form hyphenated clubs. (Cole, 1963:139)

...global restructuring has altered the socioeconomic context in which migrants actions are embedded. Both in the United States and in the Dominican Republic, migrants have seen labor markets and other economic conditions change drastically. New opportunities have opened and some old ones shut down... Dominican migrants are evolving into a social group whose economic, social, and cultural territory transcends national boundaries. (Guarnizo, 1994:162)

It will be helpful to frame the discussion of community development efforts with a brief summary of the differences and similarities in the contexts for present-day and earlier transnational practices1, in order to separate out what have always been the challenges to the political and economic advancement of culturally (and often linguistically) marginalized immigrant groups from some of the newer dilemmas that face Dominicans in Lawrence today.

In previous chapters I have emphasized many of the continuities between the Dominican immigration experience and earlier immigrant groups. I have noted that repatriation—the act of returning to one’s homeland—was common earlier in the century, as was circulation and seasonal employment2. Remittances have been a signature of nearly every immigrant group, even those political refugees who had little prospect of returning home. For those not barred from returning, travel and communication methods were not insurmountable barriers, as indicated by the Irish “group excursions” mentioned in Chapter Two. Finally—and perhaps most importantly—the idea that one’s stay in the U.S. was temporary was a common one3. As Piore (1979:50) observed, “Most such migrations [labor migrations] in the beginning are temporary. The typical migrant plans to spend only a short time in the industrial area; he then expects to return home. Staying represents a change of plans.”

However, there are a number of important (and sometimes contradictory) differences that mark the context in which Dominican (and other) im/migrants are currently operating. Foremost

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1 I am grateful to Peggy Levitt for her insights and loan of a forthcoming manuscript in helping me clarify some of my thinking here.
2 For example, as Roberts (1995:48) observes, 45% of Italians and 33% of Poles entering the United States between 1899 and 1924 had returned to Europe by 1924; many English mill workers regularly cycled back and forth between mills in England and New England.
3 This was perhaps more true for the French-Canadians and the Italians than for some of the Irish, who were fleeing unlivable conditions (famine, starvation) at home.
among these are: 1) As the Dominican awareness of “being here because the U.S. was there” demonstrates, the connections between sending and receiving countries are different than they were 100 or even 50 years ago. The U.S. was not responsible for the Irish potato famine or Turkish imperialism, but it has been intimately politically and economically involved in the Dominican Republic; migrations flows thus occur in a context in which national boundary lines are already less clear on a practical level. 2) In an interesting counterpoint to this, the ideological boundary lines have become more clearly drawn at a number of different levels: the historical consolidation of national identity, the more recent re-emergence of nativist discourses that attempt to define such categories as “American” in an exclusive fashion, and the concomitant (or perhaps slightly prior) emergence of American multiculturalism as a context in which maintaining and valorizing one’s cultural traditions and identity is legitimated. 3) The restructuring of the economy on a global scale has resulted in more polarized, unstable labor markets in many parts of both the service and manufacturing sectors, offering new immigrants less opportunity for economic advancement. 4) Advances in information, media, transportation, and communication technologies facilitate more rapid and frequent back and forth movement of both people and ideas in sending and receiving communities, sustaining relationships that might otherwise become attenuated; television (as well as film and home videos) allows images of life in each place to permeate the other.

In the context of these larger continuities and changes, aspects of which I have attempted to elaborate on in previous chapters, the adaptive transnational practices in which many Dominicans engage are part of a long tradition of similar immigrant strategies. Given the particular intersection of the City’s history and economic structure (including its place in the regional economy) with these larger forces, I will attempt to elucidate some of the implications of Dominican transnational practices for achieving political and economic power in the City. At the same time, I will touch on some on the other challenges that confront this group—challenges that have always been a part of life in the Immigrant City.

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4 Although we take the nation-state and the idea of nationalism for granted, these entities are a relatively recent invention historically speaking (Anderson, 1983)—and perhaps more so for Dominicans, who experienced an intensification of this process under Trujillo. I actually think this is especially interesting considering that many of those writing about globalization and the rise of the transnational corporation have argued that the nation-state is increasingly obsolete. As an ideological construct, “the nation” is proving very problematic—which is precisely when nationalist discourses tend to re-emerge…

5 Interestingly, television also allows immigrants to maintain a connection to culture or the homeland without necessarily achieving this through connections to other people in the immigrant community.
CHAPTER FIVE
IMPLICATIONS...

Si hubiera un puente, todo el mundo vendría aquí.
(If there were a bridge, the whole world would come here.)\(^1\)

Yo te puedo asegurar que si hubiera un puente de aquí para allá, todos íbamos para allá... vamos y venimos diario.
(I can assure you that if there were a bridge from here to there, all of us would be going there. Going and coming daily.)\(^2\)

American Dreaming, Island Dreaming: The Double Bind
One curious aspect of the relationship between the Island and the City is the way that each place functions as a safety valve for the other. For instance, if you will recall the brief discussion of the labor organizing situation in the Dominican Republic, the fact that migration exists as an option (for those who can gather the financial and social resources) tends to dilute workers’ responses to unsatisfactory working conditions. Thus, low wages and repression of union activity in the free trade zones, or blocked social mobility for politically unconnected members of the middle class, leads less to collective advocacy for change than to individual decisions to migrate to a better life in the glamorous United States\(^3\). At the same time, as we saw in Chapter Four, dreams of the life one left behind on the Island exert a powerful pull on Dominicans in the City—perhaps reinforced by the inevitable disillusionment with life in the States. Because many Dominicans, at least initially, believe their sojourn here to be a temporary measure aimed at gathering the resources necessary to be able to return, this limits the investment they are willing or able to make (again, initially) in improving the conditions of life for their community (as a whole)\(^4\) in the

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\(^1\) Interview, 3/1/99 (Man, 50s, former Constitutionalist).
\(^2\) Interview, 3/5/99 (Woman, 40s, teacher).
\(^3\) Which, since it drains the country of those with both resources and initiative, can worsen the situation. In this way, the Dominican government’s support for emigration is a short-sighted response to a deep-rooted problem.
\(^4\) People are often significantly invested in bettering their own lives (or their families’ lives), but do not always make the connection between community empowerment and individual advancement.

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Lawrence is a place that has a lot of prejudice, and people don’t want any changes and people don’t want to understand the reality, that the city is changing... the reality is that a lot of Hispanic kids are going to school and they’re not being treated fairly. I feel so uncomfortable and I know that as part of the Hispanic community I have a mouth to cry for them, to speak up for them. My community, they’re too “yes, yes, yes, I’m sorry, I’m sorry.” But sorry of what? You work, you put a little piece by, you pay taxes, why do you feel so guilty? Because you couldn’t get an education? My community is now moving because they are afraid, they don’t want to be laid off, they don’t want to confront anybody. A lot of injustice is going on.\(^5\)

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\(^5\) Interview, 4/8/99 (Woman, 40s, teacher, 25 years in the U.S.).
City. As was exemplified in the case of Pedro in Chapter Four, many of the more difficult or unpleasant aspects of life in the U.S., such as dead-end jobs or casual discrimination, become endurable when viewed from the vantage point of possible return.

**Expectations of Stay**

As Roberts (1995) notes, a "crucial aspect of immigrant adjustment" is not simply the length of time one has spent in the receiving country, but the "socially expected duration"—the belief an immigrant holds about the length of his or her sojourn. Because "immigration flows through social networks," this belief is rooted not only in an individual’s experience, but also in his or her knowledge about the customary migration patterns of friends, family, and compatriots; moreover, it changes over time as new information about possible courses of action and outcomes becomes available. For instance, "a single unexpected event, such as a change of job, may modify an individual’s expectation of stay and capacity to contribute to a household." But it takes many unexpected events to modify or change a group expectation of how long an individual in that particular role position should stay or what he or she should contribute" (1995:54) [my emphasis]. The Dominican community in Lawrence is particularly interesting because there are signs that the group expectation of stay (and thus of the potential rewards of political action) may be changing, as I shall discuss below. However, this process of change is complicated by the fact that new immigrants continue to arrive daily, many of them (by virtue of family ties) now coming directly from the Island. As the community is constantly replenished by new members, many of whom are still operating from a (modified) "birds of passage" mindset, the belief in the temporary nature of one’s stay remains a strong trend. Moreover, there is little evidence that flows from the Island will cease in the coming years; as one respondent commented, "*Es decir que cada más día habrá más inmigrantes porque hay menos esperanza*" ("it is said that each new day there will be more immigrants because there is less hope"). Insofar as migration may worsen conditions back home, by facilitating a "brain drain," exacerbating differences between migrant and non-migrant households, or re-channeling labor militancy (among other impacts) it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

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6 Antonio’s story, while not typical, is illustrative of this point. He came to Lawrence from the Dominican Republic with his wife in 1987 (his mother-in-law was already here) and found work as a teacher’s aide in the school where his daughter was enrolled, but then the school canceled the program he had been working with. He came back home very discouraged; then, as he tells it, "something incredible happened. When I was sitting in my living room thinking on what to do, the phone rang. I picked up the phone and a man who was the boss of my son asked me for my son and then I said: ‘He is not at home at home’ and then I hung up. The phone rang again and the man asked me: ‘What are you doing at home now? Why are you not working? Oh, okay, I see what happened.’ And then I received another phone call when he asked me: ‘Would you like to work at the High School because my wife is working with people at the High School who are recruiting Spanish-speaking teachers and they need one who can help teaching math.’ Then I told him that I was interested and this very same day I went to the High School and they hired me to work as a teacher aide... then I started to help in math teaching and then I became by myself a math teacher and then I moved to science teacher. I went to Lowell University and got the education degree and got my certification... then I was a science teacher and I have been teaching science for ten years.”

7 Grasmuck and Pessar (1991) have found that people emigrating from the Dominican Republic have higher levels of education and professional experience than those remaining behind.
The Role of Belief

I emphasize the term “believe” because the social and economic realities of immigrants’ lives often complicate this situation, as we saw in Chapter Four. As one older resident of the City observed, “tienen el sueño de regresar pero aquí hay gente que cada vez que piensan que van a regresar, ya que tienen la mochila recogida para regresar, tienen que echar para atrás otra vez” (“they have the dream of returning, but there are people here who, each time that they think they are going to return, that they have their bags packed to go, have to turn back again”). The difficulties of accumulating an economía in light of low wages and the necessity to send remittances home can be considerable, as several people informed me; this may also be why I heard fewer tales of circular migration than one might expect from the literature on Dominican immigrant communities. In spite of this, the dream of returning can persist even after years in the City, especially in the wake of disappointment. One woman I talked with at the Department of Transitional Assistance, who had been in the States for 25 years (first in New York, then in Lawrence), informed me that she was leaving for the Dominican Republic the following week, despite the fact that most of her family was here, citing discrimination and the instability of temporary work as her main motivations for returning.

I also emphasize the term “believe” because belief is a powerful, and often problematic (though often emancipatory), force, with ambivalent implications for community development efforts in the City. Moreover, the belief functions independently of the realization of the dream, so that (I would argue) it matters less whether one is actually moving back and forth, than that one is always yearning for and seeing as a possibility a place where the grass is somehow greener, depending on what one is lacking at the moment (not to diminish the severity of the lack that exists). In fact, one place becomes constituted by its lack in relationship to the other place. I cannot emphasize this enough. One of the central problems to grapple with in community development efforts within the Dominican community in Lawrence is not

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Moreover, I wish to emphasize that Island orientation and desire to return is not the only barrier to political action; the exhaustion induced by working multiple jobs, learning English or coping without it, and supporting a family are powerful obstacles to taking on other activities.

It is important to qualify this by noting that this may also be due to the composition of my sample.

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6 Interview, 3/18/99 (Woman, early 20s, nonprofit staffperson).
the fact of transnational practices—indeed, there may even be ways to build upon these practices to encourage community involvement and political action—but the framework and the emotional landscape in which they frequently occur. In the neighborhood in which I work, the people who have become most actively involved in the neighborhood association have not necessarily been characterized by their lack of either transnational ties or love for their homeland. But often they are people who identify the similarities and the connections as well as the differences between the two places, and see some continuity between their actions in each place. As one neighborhood resident and interviewee noted, “It doesn’t matter if I’m going to stay in Lawrence ten days, a year, two years, I have to do something. As a community person, when I moved to Lawrence I got involved right away... How can you live in a community and not be part of it?”

Negative Reinforcement
Piore (1979:52) argues that it is in the “transition from temporary migration to permanent settlement that most of the social conflict and political problems surrounding the migration process arise.” In this light, the complaint about Dominican “transience” in the face of considerable evidence to the contrary can be seen more as an expression of fear and anxiety by older populations in the City than as an accurate assessment of the situation. As I have continually stressed, there is a difference between transience and maintaining transnational ties, and there is a difference between desiring to return and actually doing so. It is critical to emphasize that the belief that one will or should return does not exist in a vacuum—or even simply in the social context of the Dominican community—but is reinforced time and again by the deep-seated racism and discrimination of the larger society. Nearly all of my respondents had experienced some form of discrimination or prejudice, usually (but not always) in an employment situation, generally involving an inaccurate evaluation of their abilities or a dismissal of their ideas and input. In fact, it is this racism, more than the

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11 In fact, if social conflict and political problems are signs of permanent settlement, then there is pretty solid evidence of Dominican permanence... not only has the Justice Department been called in several times to prevent discrimination against Latino voters, but the Dominican campaign manager for the Puerto Rican City Councilor and State Representative is currently leading a recall effort against the Irish Mayor.

12 Lest I sound totally despairing here, let me point out that several respondents also mentioned instances in which they had been encouraged and supported by Anglo employers or friends.

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In my first job I remember—I didn’t know the meaning at the time, but I remember I had no more than a week working there, and something happened to the machine, and I called the mechanic, and in my limited English—but I could show him what was wrong... he called the floor supervisor and I don’t know exactly what he said, but I know he said “Mickey Mouse,” referring to me, “Mickey Mouse says.” They smiled and they laughed and they walked away. But the machine continued to do whatever it was doing, so the following day he came over, he apologized and said, “I guess you knew what you were talking about.”... it was hard because I could see that in some cases I was better educated than some of the people who were prejudging me... [but] I always tried to convince myself that I knew who I was, and the people who knew me knew who I was and what I could do.13

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13 Interview, 2/12/99 (Man, 40s, engineer by training).
transnational practices that it can work to justify or reinforce, that I believe represents the most enduring challenge to Dominican advancement in the United States. While it is beyond the range of this thesis to enter into a complex discussion about how to fight racism in the United States, I will just mention that many of my informants felt very strongly that education was the most important priority both for themselves, in terms of studying and learning English, and for the next generation, in terms of their ability to move up the occupational ladder.

Asymmetries
As I mentioned in Chapter 3, transnational practices are not necessarily emancipatory simply because they involve a certain transcendence of national borders. For example, in discussing the return migration phenomenon, Guarnizo (1997) cautions that, “Serial resettlement in more than one country is possible only for those who possess the resources necessary to come and go as they see fit. As access to these resources is unevenly distributed among classes and genders, so, by implication, are transnational practices.” In this case, discrimination becomes not only an experience that can intensify the desire for connection to the imagined homeland, but also a limitation on one’s ability to realize that connection. Indeed, transnational practices are experienced differently according to individual resources and context. For instance, those with more education and social ties, like Ramon in Chapter 3, experience the ability to take advantage of business opportunities in both countries as further empowerment, while those who enter the country with less skills and find themselves continually shuffled around by temporary agencies to different low-wage, dead-end jobs, may experience remittances home (while necessary) as a burden on their ability to either advance here or accumulate sufficient savings to return.

Critical Mass?
It is also important to note that many of those who have been involved in the neighborhood association, as well as those who are leaders in the Dominican community, are generally those who have been in the City for longer periods of time, and are, on balance, more oriented toward the City than the Island—though for many this was an evolving process. The

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14 Which, again, is not to say that they do not maintain transnational ties; just that more of their energy is focused on activities within the City rather than on the Island.

15 Interview, 3/8/99 (Man, 40s, here less than one year, factory worker, former professor).
"socially expected durations" of each immigrant interact with the real-time trajectory of their stay in the City, and change in the process. Whether or not a given Dominican immigrant decides to make a more or less permanent home in the City depends on a number of factors. As the Dominican migration to Lawrence is a family and political migration as well as an economic and labor migration, the complications of evolving community formation and growing social networks, when combined with the reduced savings potential that employment in the low-wage manufacturing and service sectors offers, mean that plans to leave are often postponed indefinitely. The presence of family and children, as we saw before, can also be powerful deterrents to return.

**Snapshot**

Of the three workers I talked with one day at a temporary agency in the City, one (who had been in the City six years) indicated that he used to go back and forth quite a bit but no longer does so (he did not indicate why); another, who had moved to Lawrence from New York a year ago, said that he planned to go back to the Island eventually (sooner rather than later); and a third, who had come directly from the Island eight days before, said that he had no plans to return.

Many of my informants seem to feel that the orientation toward the Dominican Republic has undergone a sea change in the last five or six years, and that back-and-forth movement has become less common than it was. This could be an indication that the Lawrence Dominican community is now gathering critical mass, such that while some return migration will remain a feature of community life, it will no longer be the defining characteristic. Several people interviewed seemed to feel that the growing second generation—and the third generation as well—will be the keys to Dominican political empowerment, as the first generation “still has it too much in their heads to return.” There are signs of increasing Dominican political activity in the City; in addition to the Justice Department activity mentioned earlier, there is a Dominican resident who is now a member of the School Committee, and it was a Dominican-initiated coalition of Dominican and Puerto Rican voters that put Puerto Rican City Councilor Jose Santiago in the Statehouse in 1998. However, I believe that the Dominican community must confront and overcome several challenges in seeking political power and

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16 Interview, 2/17/99 (Man, 40s, former doctor, here 5 years).
greater voice in the City: 1) the legacy of the patterns of participation that characterize political life on the Island, leading to corrupt and inequitable outcomes (and that in fact have been part of the motivation for emigration); 2) the “immigrant cycle” that has historically characterized life in the City, leading more established groups to redirect the discrimination that they have experienced toward newer arrivals; and 3) the traditional rivalry with the Puerto Rican community, which has often prevented these two culturally distinct groups from facing the many similar difficulties they encounter together.

**Political Baggage**
Possibilities for and avenues of political and community participation among immigrant groups are often shaped by their experience of such activities in their country of origin. Given the strength of transnational ties in the Dominican community, and the challenges described above, it makes sense to complicate the sketch of Dominican involvement in politics offered in Chapter Three by briefly looking at a study of poor and working-class households in Santo Domingo, many of whom had a member abroad (Lozano, 1997). The bad news is that in general, Lozano found his survey respondents to be “profoundly skeptical of political action as a vehicle for solving their problems, both at an individual level and at the level of the community” (1997:176). He traces this sentiment to the situation of clientelist authoritarianism that has long characterized the Dominican state, which leaves people more prone to “work the system” for individual favors than to struggle collectively (while, paradoxically, infusing a certain amount of liveliness into the political process, as people have the possibility of direct personal gain at stake). Only 9% of the survey respondents were members of a neighborhood organization, while a little over a fifth were members of a political party. Those who did

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17 Clientelist authoritarianism refers to a situation in which the “popular classes”—the poor, working class, and elements of the middle class—exchange “mass acquiescence for timely handouts” (Lozano, 1997:181). Thus, as long as the state occasionally steps in to mitigate the worst conditions—for example by installing a sewage system or building a school—or as long as political party membership will ensure the occasional small favor, citizens have little experience of or context for collective political action to achieve larger goals.

18 Ironically—or perhaps not so ironically, given the way that Lawrence exhibits other characteristics of the “peripheralization at the core” discussed earlier—Dominicans have come to a City where political patronage is almost as much a way of life as it is in the Dominican Republic.

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A pesar de que nosotros somos unidos entre nosotros mismos, ya hablando en términos generales, entre los Hispanos nosotros no hemos logrado la unidad como se debe. Si tú le hablas a un Dominico de un Portorriqueño te dice algo pero si tú le hablas a un Portorriqueño de un Dominico te dice algo... estas dos razas siempre se viven tirando una con la otra. Al estar siempre en pugna una raza con la otra y al no unirnos, entonces no podemos tener poder político. Si nosotros todos nos unéramos sin pensar en que el candidato es Dominico o el candidato es Portorriqueño... Porque somos nosotros los que estamos sufriendo las consecuencias...19

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19 Interview, 3/5/99 (Woman, 40s, teacher, here several years).
belong to a neighborhood organization tended to be employed, as well as younger, less poor, and better educated than other respondents. On a more hopeful note, over 60% of respondents across most social categories (gender, age, income, occupation) were in favor of participation in a neighborhood or community organization, which seems to at least open the door to this kind of activity. Safa (1995:120-1) also notes that while women in the Dominican Republic continue to receive less attention than men from many labor unions and formal political parties, during the 1980s they were increasingly able to organize at the neighborhood level to protest government policies and advocate for better services.

**Roundabout Approaches**

These philosophical meanderings are actually to say that I do not think one can tackle beliefs directly. The point is not to persuade people to change their minds, to convince them that they will or should stay (time and experience may or may not do that for them), but to discover what their abilities and needs are, and provide opportunities for them to get involved in ways that are familiar or around things that are important to them. The most successful organizing efforts in the neighborhood where I work naturally have been built around the concerns and frameworks of people within the neighborhood. As we quickly discovered, the networks to which people in the neighborhood belong are rarely place-based; many revolve around family. Thus, for example, efforts to organize summer activities and build a playground for neighborhood children and youth, which arose out of resident concerns that their children had nowhere to go and nothing to do after school, have garnered considerable support. On the other hand, community meetings specifically billed as “long-term planning” events have occasioned less enthusiasm—not, I would argue, because residents do not care about the neighborhood, but because the way the meetings were framed did not correlate with many residents'

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20 The North Common neighborhood is among the poorer and more distressed neighborhoods in the City. Over 80% Latino in 1990, it had more children, larger families, and much lower household income than the City as a whole. Unemployment was near 30%, nearly half the population was living below the poverty line, and close to 70% of adults (age 25+) had less than a high school education (U.S. Census, 1990, STF3A, Lawrence, Tract 2509).

21 I mean this in the sense that residents may not think of them as primarily emanating from or tied to a particular place, although families or people from the same hometown may live in the same neighborhood.

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22 Interview, 3/8/99 (Man, 40s, here less than one year, factory worker, former professor).
perceptions of both their priorities and their capacity to get involved, nor did they necessarily build on already existing networks such as extended families.

**ABCD (Asset-Based Community Development)**
A related roundabout strategy for community development in this context draws on the recent trend towards asset-based community development—the idea that communities can best improve themselves not by concentrating on all the things that are wrong or lacking, but by shifting the focus to the resources present and the opportunities for advancement, and building on these strengths to accomplish increasingly larger projects. I believe this is a particularly attractive strategy in this context because it also begins to address the “grass is always greener” problem highlighted above—instead of concentrating on some defining lack in the City, this encourages people to reframe their perception of the place. At the same time, because a community’s biggest assets are often its people, this approach provides plenty of room for a focus on personal development that essentially says, “you can take this with you.” It might become more plausible for people to get involved in neighborhood planning efforts if doing so is a means of developing transferable skills and experience (such as leadership experience or project management) that they can apply back on the Island if they choose to do so. In addition, community members often have an intuitive understanding of such “re-framing” projects; as one local business owner put it in referring to neighborhood youth, “everyone thinks of them as part of the problem, but I think they can be part of the solution.”

**“Su Conocimiento Está en el Aire”**
(“Their Knowledge is Up in the Air”)23
Another advantage of an asset-based approach is that it could lead towards leveraging the presence of the Dominican doctors, lawyers, professors, accountants, teachers, and civil engineers in the City, who are not working in their chosen field, but instead in low- and semi-skilled factory jobs because of their lack of English. While this group is by no means the majority of the population, they still represent a substantial untapped resource whose skills are currently underutilized and downgraded. This is not to suggest that one necessarily concentrate efforts on, for example, finding engineering jobs for Dominican engineers in the U.S., since such a process is considerably complicated by the need to

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23 Interview, 3/5/99.

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24 Interview 2/17/99 (Male, 40s, businessman).
obtain the certification required to operate in the States, and could easily raise false hopes regarding the ease of advancement. However, these skills could be utilized on a volunteer basis by local non-profit corporations, which would add to the capacity of community organizations and provide some immigrants with the opportunity to adapt their training to a new context. Moreover, skills are not necessarily field-specific, nor are they exclusive to people who have formal education and training. It is not only the knowledge of professionals that remains “up in the air” in the context of the Lawrence economy, but also the capabilities and potential of those with less formal backgrounds. Most of the jobs available in the regional economy to monolingual Dominican immigrants are not linked to training or ESL programs, or to career ladders. These jobs in fact represent the exploitation of certain aspects of a linguistically isolated immigrant labor force by firms reacting to larger economic changes, and not a forward-thinking attempt to build on the considerable strengths of this population.

**Stickiness and Patience**

Another major challenge for community development efforts in the City is what I would call the enduring stickiness of the cultural issue; that is, the feel-good rhetoric around cultural diversity, while well-intentioned, often glosses over the real discomfort and frustration that can accompany efforts at cross-cultural communication and attempts to build a bilingual, multicultural organization. The difficulty of this situation has become abundantly clear through the organizing process. For example, the mere fact of holding neighborhood meetings in both English and Spanish means that residents, usually working people with families, need to spend twice as long planning events or working through problems as they usually do. While this process is beyond a doubt worth the effort, it requires enormous patience from participants in both the short-term and the long-term.

**Transnational Community Development?**

Finally, an interesting possibility for community development efforts arises from the suggestion made at the beginning of Chapter Four—that if planners and organizers look and listen carefully they can find cultural resources and habits that can be adapted to both their client communities and the City as a whole. However, these skills could be utilized on a volunteer basis by local non-profit corporations, which would add to the capacity of community organizations and provide some immigrants with the opportunity to adapt their training to a new context. Moreover, skills are not necessarily field-specific, nor are they exclusive to people who have formal education and training. It is not only the knowledge of professionals that remains “up in the air” in the context of the Lawrence economy, but also the capabilities and potential of those with less formal backgrounds. Most of the jobs available in the regional economy to monolingual Dominican immigrants are not linked to training or ESL programs, or to career ladders. These jobs in fact represent the exploitation of certain aspects of a linguistically isolated immigrant labor force by firms reacting to larger economic changes, and not a forward-thinking attempt to build on the considerable strengths of this population.

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25 According to the 1990 Census, 41% of Spanish-speaking households in Lawrence were “linguistically isolated”—that is, no one in the household spoke English.

26 Interview, 3/2/99 (Male, 50s, former Constitutionalist).
whole. Thus we might ask: can we build on the strength of ties that are already strong enough to span oceans? For example, chain migration often means that a cluster of people from the same hometown are living in the same neighborhood or city. Levitt (1998) documents the activities of a “transnational community development corporation” linking the inhabitants of the village of Miraflores in the Dominican Republic with their migrant relatives in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood of Boston; members engage in joint fundraising, planning, and decision-making efforts in order to implement community development projects (such as constructing a village funeral home) in Miraflores. Once the institutional infrastructure for such efforts exists, channeling time, energy, and other resources to projects in a hometown on the Island (and anecdotal evidence indicates at least one such organization exists in Lawrence), can such an organization be adapted to similar efforts here in the City?

It remains to be seen how the 1994 decision of the Dominican government to allow dual citizenship (partially due to the enormous importance migrant remittances now play in the Dominican national economy) will affect transnational practices and political participation. Dominicans who were reluctant to naturalize and sever that symbolic tie with their homeland (as well as the right to vote on the Island) no longer have to make the choice of politically being either American or Dominican, and this may free them to become more involved in their adopted homeland. As Dominican naturalization rates have lagged behind the rates of the U.S. immigrant population as a whole, it will be interesting to see if this statistic changes over the next few years.

| Table 5.1: U.S. Citizenship Status of Immigrants |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1996              | Dominican       | All Immigrants  |
| Total             | 515,000         | 24,557,000      |
| Naturalized       | 24%             | 32%             |
| Not a Citizen     | 76%             | 68%             |

Source: INS Statistical Yearbook, 1996

The preceding discussion has merely touched upon some of the implications and directions for community development efforts in the City. In the last chapter, I will summarize the story told here and suggest possible areas of further research.

As a woman, I celebrated in my class Women's History Month. My kids interviewed two of the teachers that work with us in the classroom and we read about Mother Theresa, we read about Lady Diana, we read about Hillary Clinton, we read about Rosa Parks, Coretta King, Oprah Winfrey. We read about a lot of different women... Kids have to be able to look at role models that are good images for them to continue going. I cannot limit my class to one way, I cannot tell them the only people are going to make it are the Dominican people... when people ask me where am I from, I say I’m from the United Nations, and a lot of people say, “Hey, you’re Black, you’re Hispanic, why are you calling yourself from the United Nations?” I consider myself open to everybody.27

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27 Interview, 4/8/99 (Woman, 40s, teacher, 25 years in the U.S.).
CHAPTER SIX
ROADS AHEAD

Travels and Travails
I began this thesis with a seemingly simple question: Why, and how, are Dominicans in Lawrence? In the course of my research on the topic, numerous interviews with community members, and work on a community organizing and neighborhood planning project in North Lawrence, I began to understand that the motives for migration, as well as the barriers and opportunities facing Dominicans in the City, depend on a complex intersection of political, economic, cultural, and social forces linking the Island to the City. In attempting to draw this picture for the reader, I have of necessity painted with a very broad brush, as my aim was more to deepen the general understanding of the Dominican community in the City (and some of the individuals and families that it comprises) than to undertake an exhaustive investigation of any one part of it.

Toward this end, I began the thesis with a brief exploration of the history of the Island, recent economic changes, and the close ties that have linked the Island to the United States for over 100 years. I argued that a history of U.S. political influence, twice culminating in military occupation, and a strong North American corporate presence have helped alter the political and economic opportunities available to Dominicans and created intense “cultural-ideological” links between the two places. I also noted that migration, which began as a response to political upheaval, has assumed an increasingly important role in the economy of the Island, and has given rise to a set of “transnational practices” through which immigrants maintain ties to their homeland.

I then traveled back to Lawrence in order to understand its traditional roles as both a planned industrial city and a destination for new immigrants. I touched upon the changing industrial structure of the City and explored how those changes—a simultaneous de-industrialization and expanding service economy—were linked to larger regional and global economic changes. I argued that these changes affected both the mode of incorporation of immigrants into this regional economy and the opportunities available to them. I also argued that, contrary to popular belief, the Dominican immigrant experience bears many similarities to the experiences of past immigrant groups to the City, and that transnational practices in themselves are nothing new in the Immigrant City.

Given the logic of the City and the way in which it is integrated into a capitalist system of production, Chapter Three began to explore the character of Dominican life in the City and the particular activities of Dominican immigrants. I observed that Dominicans in the City engaged in a broad variety of both transnational and creole practices—involving ties to the Island and cultural adaptations in the City—that spanned political, economic, social, and cultural spheres. I noted that the Dominican community in Lawrence appears to have originated as a secondary settlement from New York, although family ties have now created a direct link to the Island. This Chapter also showed that family ties, along with the particular jobs and economic strategies immigrants engage in vis-a-vis the regional economy, help explain why Dominicans continue to come to a City where socioeconomic conditions are not promising.
Chapter Four explored (albeit incompletely) how Dominicans in the City understand and contextualize their lives, in an attempt to convey some of the heterogeneity of the Dominican community and understand how the details of people’s lives interact with larger social structures to change or reinforce individual and family experiences of the migration process. It touched on intergenerational and gender tensions, and discussed how the language barrier—“the tip of the iceberg of the cultural barrier”—constrains opportunities in a number of ways. I dwelt on the “transculturation” process, as many interviewees termed it, and noted the persistence of both the American Dream and the dream of returning to the Island as framing ideals for people’s experience. I also observed that discrimination and racial prejudice continue to play a destructive role in people’s lives.

A pair of bridge images opened Chapter Five and were meant as a defining metaphor for many of the concerns of the Chapter. The first quote, from an older man who was a political émigré from the Island in the mid-late 1960s and came to Lawrence from New York in the mid-1970s, implied a forward-looking, one-way crossing; the second quote, from a woman in her 40s more recently arrived in the City, presented an image of circulation. I went on to discuss the “double bind” that the Island and American Dreams can create for Dominican immigrants, as each place comes to symbolize the lack in the other, and touched on the ways that one’s “expected stay” can evolve over time in a complex context of community and family ties, constrained opportunities, and continuing discrimination. I noted that the Dominican community in the City appears to be reaching a certain “critical mass” necessary for political power, and offered some concerns and challenges with which the community must deal in moving towards its goals. Based on my still-evolving understanding of the Dominican community in Lawrence, I also offered several broad suggestions for shaping future community development efforts in the City.

Debts to the Literature
While no one theory can adequately explain the Dominican community’s presence in the City, the insights and theories of many authors have profoundly influenced this thesis. Piore’s work on temporary labor migrations, while an inadequate explanation for the Dominican presence in Lawrence, was nevertheless invaluable in helping me understand the incorporation of Dominican immigrants into a changing regional labor market. Sassen was key in uncovering some of the larger economic structures within which both the City and Island operate, and Waldinger was useful in looking at Dominican entrepreneurship patterns as responses to both group characteristics and specific historical conditions. Portes was a treasure on immigration in general and a constant reminder that immigrants are the wellspring of this country. Roberts’ work on socially expected durations provided a way to get a handle on the “double dream,” while Ramos was a welcome invitation to remember that people exist along a number of axes, of which ethnicity is only one. Safa’s insightful work on Dominican women gave me food for thought about the issue of labor militancy and withdrawal. Mitchell was instrumental in deepening my understanding of the political origins of Dominican migration to the U.S. Cole’s meticulously researched treatise on the Immigrant City was also a treasure, and fun to read besides.

In terms of empirical studies, Grasmuck and Pessar’s seminal Between Two Islands (as well as their other works) was a constant reference and helped me shape my interview questions (such as they were). Bray was highly useful in understanding earlier migration, although I believe the
class composition of the Dominican immigrant flow has shifted somewhat since his study. Guarnizo was invaluable in introducing me to the concept of transnationalism, although my findings do not indicate the extent of narrow transnational activity that his do. And speaking of narrow (and broad), Itzigsohn et al. were perhaps the most helpful in sorting through my thinking about transnationalism—how I would know it if I saw it, as it were. Lozano provided critical depth to my understanding of Dominican political involvement.

I also owe thanks to both Peggy Levitt of Wellesley College and Ramona Hernández of UMass Boston for pushing me to clarify my thinking and inquiries on this topic.

Limitations
As I mentioned back in the Introductory Remarks, there are several limitations to my research findings, which I should once again acknowledge. The class and educational background of my sample is not reflective of the entire Dominican community in the City, skewed as it is towards those with a greater amount of education or training (there is certainly some class variation in the sample; the reader will undoubtedly have noted a strong working-class political consciousness in several of the quotes). Moreover, the average length of time in the City among my interviewees is probably well over ten years, which may account for some of perceptions that the orientation toward the Island has been shifting in the past few years. Finally, my sample does not at all capture the voices and experiences of more recent female immigrants to the City; this is a key shortcoming as the Dominican migration has become increasingly female over the last few years.

II. FURTHER RESEARCH

This document is only a beginning; as a broad and necessarily incomplete study, it naturally raises more questions than it answers. The following are areas of potential further research suggested by some of the issues and concerns raised in these pages:

1) In describing the earlier Puerto Rican migration to the United States, Ueda might easily have been characterizing elements of the current Dominican flow:

   ...many were poor workers in the early stages of their earning cycle. The close contact they enjoyed with their homelands encouraged persisting Spanish usage that complicated their efforts to take advantage of opportunities calling for contact with English speakers. The cumulative process of intergenerational investment in the host country was limited by their transfer of earnings home and disrupted by the frequency of return. (1994:92-3)

Moreover, Torres and Bonilla (1993): in touching on the Dominican community in New York, note that the initial experiences of Puerto Ricans in the States closely parallel Dominican patterns: a similar process of labor market incorporation, the development of a number of bodegas and businesses serving an economically constrained ethnic market in the barrio, and a tradition of heavy remittances and profit repatriation, leading to the eventual retirement or relocation back to the Island of entrepreneurs. During the last 20 years Dominicans in New York have been following much the same social trajectory as Puerto Ricans before them, and by many
measures their situation has been getting worse, as indicated by increasing levels of poverty and welfare dependency. Unlike Puerto Ricans, Dominicans are not born U.S. citizens, which creates a time lag in their ability to “convert residential concentration into voting power”; in addition, their “greater African heritage” makes Dominicans more vulnerable to the still deep-seated racism of American society. In light of these conditions, it would be useful to conduct a comparative study of the Puerto Rican and Dominican communities in Lawrence focusing particularly on patterns of settlement, modes of adjustment, changing fortunes over time, and relations between the two groups (this last topic is particularly important in understanding and addressing historic sources of tension between the two nationalities).

2) Talk of the dream of returning begs the question of whether or not transnationalism is a first generation phenomenon, the longing for the old country and attachment to the home culture that has become a truism about all first generation immigrants. Are there extensive transnational practices among second generation Dominican-Americans? Some authors indicate that the problems facing the second generation have more to do with the segmented assimilation than transnationalism—that is, that the second generation is not maintaining ties to the Island, but neither is it experiencing substantial upward mobility or integration into “mainstream America.” Moreover, Roberts has argued that a transnational ethnic community “whose culture and commitments are neither wholly oriented toward the new country nor the old” is “most disruptive of intergenerational co-ethnic cohesion” (1995:64). A comparative study of first and second-generation Dominicans and Dominican-Americans in the City would be very helpful in determining trends in immigrant adjustment and the fortunes of the community.

5) While this thesis touches briefly on issues related to changing gender relations in the Dominican community, much more work could be done using gender as a central component of analysis. Particular areas of interest might include the composition of the Dominican workforce and whether there exists a gendered division of labor in the regional economy, possible differences in attitudes and strategies around migration among men and women in the City, and—as Itzigsohn et al (1997:334) phrase it, “whether and how transnationality is changing gender relations among Dominicans.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Snapshot: Migration to the U.S., 1996</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percent</strong></td>
<td><strong>Median Age</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dominican</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All U.S.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: INS Statistical Yearbook, 1996

3) The presence of transatlantic civic organizations, as well as substantial populations from specific towns or campos, provides an opportunity to conduct a much more in-depth study of transnational practices, especially as they pertain to creating the community development infrastructure for local development efforts in the City. As anecdotal evidence indicates that sizable settlements from Tenares, Altamira, Bani, and Bonao are present in the City, further
research on the practices of these groups, and the specific ties they maintain to their hometowns, would enhance our understanding of the ways that transnational practices shape immigrant lives and choices in the City.

4) On a related note, projects that conducted primary research in one of these communities in the Dominican Republic as well would enable exploration of what Hendricks (1983:375) has referred to as the “total social field.” This would undoubtedly deepen understanding of the lives of Dominicans in Lawrence and the ties between Island and City.

5) The lack of recent, reliable quantitative data has presented certain barriers to supporting qualitative findings with statistical information. Once the 2000 Census has been completed, it will be interesting to track poverty levels, educational attainment, and occupational structure of both Dominicans and Latinos to note any trends or dramatic shifts in behavior.

6) Immigrant groups change within themselves. Will this change the City? Will Dominicans stay and improve the city or move up and out, making room for the newer groups from Southeast Asia? Will the City, as it has to date, maintain its structural role as a magnet for the most recent immigrants coming in—Southeast Asians and Middle Easterners replacing Dominicans in the same sort of jobs?

7) The extent of undocumented Dominican immigration to the City is anybody’s guess right now, as are potential differences between documented and undocumented immigrants in labor market incorporation, use of social networks, and engagement in transnational practices. While collecting data on this traditionally hard-to-reach population presents difficulties, it would provide a more complete picture of the Dominican community in Lawrence.

8) Available research on industries in the Lawrence region does not indicate whether informal sector strategies, such as homework, are appearing in response to changes in the industrial structure—as they have in other areas of high immigration and changing economies (e.g., Los Angeles, New York). Are temp agencies filling this role in the region?

9) What are the opportunities in Lawrence for larger-scale transnational economic development strategies that build on the entrepreneurship abilities and social ties of current immigrants?

10) As Lawrence seems to have been settled by Dominican immigrants leaving New York for the relative tranquility of the Merrimack Valley, it might be interesting to compare the two communities to see if there are substantial differences in immigrant characteristics, activities, demographic composition, employment and income outcomes, etc. between the Big City and this second-level Dominican Diaspora.
... speaking (or writing or reading) one’s ‘mother tongue’ is no longer taken for
granted… one becomes aware of how naturally it flows compared to one’s not
altogether painless efforts to use other languages… one’s intellectual distance to it
grows as certain things seem to be better said in other languages…
(Hannerz, 1996:88)

En el proceso de escribiendo este tesis, la comunidad Dominicana de Lawrence me ha dado un
regalo enorme: la oportunidad de aprender y crecer a través de mis esfuerzos de expresarme en
otro lenguaje, y de saber algo de la barrera del lenguaje del otro lado. Quiero dar mis gracias por
la paciencia y generosidad de muchos miembros de la comunidad. Ha sido un placer hacer este
trabajo, y espero que ellos puedan encontrar algo de sus voces y experiencias en estas páginas.

A sus órdenes.
APPENDIX 1
TRANSLATION OF SPANISH QUOTES

Chapter 1
Page 21: We say “ transculturation”... this is not a current phenomenon, it comes from before Columbus. We have a synonym: “Guaguacanari Complex.” Guaguacanari was one of the five chieftains who inhabited the island when Columbus arrived... When Columbus arrived, they looked upon him [and his men] as gods... Guaguacanari surrendered part of his territory to them so that they would help him fight against the other chieftains. We have always had this complex... I will say Guaguacanari Complex to you when you want to give something so that someone might help you, but giving up part of what is yours in the process. This happens when you grow up here from when you are very small. Then you have customs that one doesn’t have in the home country... and the customs you have here, you put them in practice there.

Page 23: There are different Dominicans here that walk toward different horizons [on different paths]. Each one with his cause. My cause... in my country I participated in a military struggle (a civil war)... then after participating in this civil war, we who participated, who confronted those who were against the people1, were obliged to emigrate against our will... the war happened when they destroyed the 1963 Constitution... The Dominican Republic, with such a democracy as it might have had—in 1965 the country began to put in practice the Revolution it needed—the return of the 1963 Constitution. And so it was that the fighting began. I participated with the liberal fighters, and the others were on the side of the corrupt ones, of those who still today continue to exploit the people and continue to make away with the riches of the country.

Page 25: In the sense of work the Free Zones were and are a salvation for the Dominican Republic, because they involve a great quantity of people in working directly. Then, indirectly there is another great quantity of people that are joined to this project because they go on Thursdays and Fridays to sell things to those who work there, revitalizing economic activity between workers and vendors... On the other hand, workers are not permitted to have unions...

Regarding the Free Zones, this is what they are: a disaster. That is what they call a parallel customs that the Dominican government has. A customs, with the pretext that the merchandise they carry gets discharged because it is for the Free Zones, but it’s a lie. It’s to avoid their own taxes... Contraband goes through there... They are organized mafias.

Page 26: There is social injustice, perhaps since the arrival of the Spaniards... a very marked social inequality, a breach between one group and another that gets worse all the time, and I belong to a large group that has very little material goods because of the maldistribution of wealth... where more than 90% of the Dominican people don’t have enough to decently improve their economic situation, and a very small group has most of the wealth concentrated in their hands... One tries to remain in one’s country, then it’s not possible because they close the doors in many places. In my case, with the academic background I have—one finds that one can’t

1 The word “pueblo” translates literally as town or village but in this case means the common people.
make use of what one knows… because if one doesn’t belong to the party that’s governing at this moment, one can’t be in a position where one can contribute what one knows.

Page 29: It’s not like people say, no, that you only come here to work and carry dollars back to your countries… if one begins to accuse, the United States would come out the loser. Because it’s not just one, two, or three countries where the U.S. has interfered, and they don’t only take money, but leave the country such that those who can, go… that is, it’s not like you just come and go… when you intervene militarily in a place… you are taking things from there to bring them here; there are many countries where this has occurred. And this is a vision that I’ve made many North American friends see. It’s not just that you might say I do this—well, I have family there that I have to maintain as well, or at least help them; I’m not going to let them die. I have to send them dollars and when I go I have to bring them money so that they can survive there.

Chapter 2
Page 32: One of the reasons so many Dominicans have immigrated to Lawrence is the peace and quiet. You know that Lawrence is small and outside of the large urban centers. It more closely resembles our neighborhoods, our towns; the children can play in the streets, they can be outside until late (above all in the summer); this wouldn’t be possible in other cities. The tranquility is what attracts us to come here.

Page 33: It is hard when you come without knowing the language. I began to work in a factory where they make shoes. This was my first work experience here… after that I went to work in a laundry… I was there for about six years… I began to do sewing, repairing clothes, and then I began to sell clothing to my co-workers. I formed a large clientele. I went to New York and after that I decided to settle here… there are people who have been here much longer than me and haven’t been able to become independent. They are still working in the factories… It is very different when you are working in a factory. Working on the line. There are many people who have come here and progressed, but for the great majority it is not so easy.

Page 37: The rich person does not want the poor person to learn, because that brings him problems. When a poor person succeeds in opening his eyes, when he succeeds in going to school and learning, he says, ah, but you were abusing me… it is not convenient for the rich that the poor progress… while the people are maintained in ignorance they can always be exploited, all their lives… but if this would not occur, for example with Affirmative Action programs, which have helped many Latinos—if these programs disappear, this is like saying, let me keep you in the dark so you don’t learn and I can continue to abuse you. This is what all the politicians are doing: stay in the dark, so that I can be your light. I will be your light, but I am not going to bring you much light—I’m going to bring you a little reflection of light so that you think, well, that is the light.

Page 39: The Dominican is a very hard worker… s/he will go where s/he can earn money. We have a saying there—you know our peso, the value of a peso is Duarte, who is our main national hero. Thus we say, “wherever Duarte may be we look for him.” Here we would have to say, “wherever Washington may be we look for him.” Thus we can work anywhere. The majority work in factories, others work as cooks in restaurants, as dishwashers, others cleaning the schools or with cleaning companies… Thus you would not be able to say to someone [another
immigrant] from the countryside, who is doing the same work as you, that although he might not have the same training [or education] as you, he must be the one to pick up the garbage. You have too unite and you have to look at the situation as equals.

Chapter 3
Page 47: A family established itself because Lawrence has a lot of industry, and made a connection with others and brought them here and so they came: all of them one after another because they knew that here were the conditions for working and living.

This all happens because there is a family, a relative who emigrates, who comes to this country, undertakes a lot of work, perhaps learns to speak a little English, or settles into a factory where they permitted or spoke more Spanish, and has lasted ten, twelve, twenty years in this factory… This person comes and begins to bring his son, his daughter, and if they are married they are going to bring their spouses, and they create a chain where the first person always passes more work to the rest.

Page 49: This part of the culture is very present… the greetings, the human relationships, all of these values inside of you… in the Dominican Republic you carry them with you from here to there; so one is always homesick… It is not because you don’t want to keep living here, but that there is all that culture… those friendships that one maintains at home and that also tie you to the country… our culture embraces all these forms of enjoyment, of living, and that is what makes me want to return quickly in spite of the fact that I haven’t completed one year here… We are grateful that you open the doors to us… but there is all this culture weighing on us. That is, the culture is like the gloves of a boxer; whoever boxes has to carry his gloves in his knapsack from there to here.

Page 50: The Dominican who comes to this country—and many sacrifice, building their savings for when they go to their country bringing the best they can buy here… through this business I realize that the majority of Dominicans are always gathering things for when they visit their country… they don’t enjoy the best here; they bring it to the Dominican Republic to enjoy it there. Thus when people there see that people come from here with so many pretty things, with new clothes, gifts, things to wear, they just get enthusiastic and they think, how easy, but they don’t know all the sacrifices that those people have made in order to bring those things there. So they deceive themselves that here there is everything, that they can obtain things easily.

Page 52: I came to Lawrence from New York because the party I belong to, the Dominican Revolutionary Party, at that time was conducting a political campaign to install Antonio Guzman Fernandez as president… So they sent me to Lawrence from New York to work on this campaign—to the district they have here called the Mirabal Sisters², to work on the campaign of Guzman who was trying to fix [to improve] some things over there… then I belonged to the Democratic Party here—I work with Congressman Marty Meehan and support his campaign every time there is an election. I work on the Kennedy campaigns too. Any democratic senator that comes to improve the situation of the Hispanics, well then there I am in the thick of politics.

² The Mirabal Sisters were four sisters who were very active in the movement against Trujillo. They were well-loved by many Dominicans for their commitment to freedom and justice. Trujillo had 3 of them killed.
Page 54: Listen, in the Dominican Republic there is a town called Janico that is said to be the second New York because almost all the people who live in Janico are residing in New York. They live here but they have family there, and so it happens that the same life that is being lived here is also being lived in Janico: with stores, discos, radios, cell phones, television antennas, huge satellite dishes… That is, they live the life of, as we call it there, the rich.

Page 56: When I arrived in Patterson, New Jersey, I worked in a factory for six months... the week of starting to work I still didn’t have papers... So I said to the American [boss], “I am doctor in Dominican Republic, you have something good for me?” And he made me a supervisor. I was supervising a department of 40 women; I lasted there six months, because after that I got a job in an electronics company. So I went to the supervisor there and he said to me, “do you know how to work with [microchips]?” And I said yes although I didn’t even know what they were, and he nearly died laughing, because he said to me, you don’t even know what they are, and I said, fine, it is true that I don’t know what that is but if you teach me I will do it.

Chapter 4

Page 65: In my ten months residing here I have had to work in six places; none of these had anything to do with the academic background that I have from the Dominican Republic, but these jobs have permitted us to keep surviving here. In the different industries in which I have been working, English is a necessity—to know it, to master it, in order to be able to stay in communication with others. Since I arrived I set myself to studying and I have gone about it with great determination, because every day I realize more what a necessity English is...but then one develops through necessity... Whoever believes that life exists without necessity will develop little... Language is the bridge by which one can know the spoken culture, at the least, and the greater part of culture is spoken. If one doesn’t speak the language, s/he is not going to know anything.

Page 67: I always say that the United States is a cancer. And do you know why I say this? Because after the cancer enters your body it is very difficult to stamp it out. After we come here and see the comforts that we have it is not true that we are going to go back there [to the Island]. Returning is always on our minds. But we go for vacation and spend a month and we want to returns because we don’t have the same facilities there. One is always homesick for one’s country, one is very nationalist. But... you know that if you work here it is very difficult to be able to save enough to be able to go back. If we have children that have grown here and they don’t want to [go back], if we still have the will to keep working, we can’t go because we can’t afford to lose our work here. This is why I say to you that the U.S. is a cancer. Because you get accustomed to living here, and it becomes difficult to return.

Page 69: Speaking of the Latino immigrant’s cultural penetration of North American culture is not easy... as we know of the cultural penetration of North America towards the Dominican Republic, because of your economic clout, your political clout, your social clout, makes it so that there is more North American influence... Latino culture is present here, it is not that it is crushed, that it doesn’t exist, but you don’t notice it as much because our economic power is limited in this country... in only one of the factories in which I worked did one of the bosses try to dance a little bachata [Dominican folk music] with a group of us that were there. But the
Latino, for example the Dominican, dances salsa [Puerto Rican], dances the corrido [Mexican]... among ourselves we quickly make a cultural mixture.

Page 70: The factory for me was horrible, because I never in my life had done that kind of work... in my household I worked with my father in the business but it was different, you see. Yes, I was working in agriculture, but I never did factory work; but I look at it positively because it was an experience; life is a school and every activity you do is another experience in your life... I don’t see it negatively, I see it very positively, because I learned to make furniture, I learned to make electronic things, and this is something, it is another bit of knowledge.

Page 72: Immigrant (poem)

I have seen the roads and footsteps of the immigrant.  
His steps fill us with happiness, dreams, and sweat.

At night I have contemplated the stars  
and the sky, obscured by darkness  
Behind, the messenger doves sleep.

I am an immigrant like the first one.  
I want to walk through the entire world,  
without the vile racial hatred that separates us.

Do not call the immigrant a stranger.  
I am not a stranger to this world.  
The immigrant lives growing.  
The universe is his bed, his poetry and food.

The immigrant has a friend, his friend smiles,  
embraces me, sings, looks at me and says...

His eyes scatter tears.  
Like the dew in nature.  
My life is here and my roots in my country,  
others wait for the first immigrant,  
on roads and in fields someone awaits them,  
the flag is the first one.  
Today the immigrant and the dove are messengers.

(With apologies to Juan Gabriel for no doubt butchering his beautiful poem.)

Chapter 5
Page 79: Well you know this is a situation of the different social levels of immigrants in Lawrence. There are immigrants who have succeeded in having a stable economia [savings, nest egg], in five years or less—they are those who can be going back and forth more. But the
majority cannot give themselves this luxury because they are accumulating money very slowly... they can’t come and go so frequently. But every year or nine months, many Dominicans travel... the hope is always to return, or to be present more in the Dominican Republic.

Page 80: Five or six years back the majority of Latinos that were in this country or this City thought like that—work, save money, and leave. They were here but they were thinking of their country. But now there is a large community of Latinos that have built families here; they’ve already put down roots and for the most part have a certain stability in this country, and now the Latino is thinking about and entering politics. Already we have a reflection of this. We have elected our first representative, Jose Santiago. And in the next election we’ll probably get a mayor, we are going to have more councilors, and a councilor-at-large, because now the Latino has become aware that in this country everything is political—that is, all decisions are political.

Page 81: Although generally speaking Dominicans are united among ourselves, among Latinos we have not succeeded in uniting as we should. If you speak to a Dominican of a Puerto Rican he’ll tell you one thing, and if you speak to a Puerto Rican of a Dominican he’ll tell you another... these two groups are always fighting with each other. When one group is always at odds with another and we are not uniting, well then we will not be able to have political power. If we united without thinking about whether the candidate was Dominican or Puerto Rican... Because we are the ones suffering the consequences...

Page 82: If a Dominican has been deceived on various occasions he thinks that whoever may come along is also going to continue deceiving him, and he has lost trust. This is a Latin American as well as Dominican phenomenon: the political parties are losing influence with the people because the people don’t have trust in them... if there is a person with some leadership they don’t follow him/her very passionately because they say “s/he is one more thieving politician,” and in this spirit they don’t have much interest in politics.

Page 83: At the least the adults have said to [the young people] that they have suffered a lot by not having adequate preparation to compete with the Anglos, they haven’t occupied good work positions because they weren’t as prepared. Thus they are saying to the youth, prepare yourselves intellectually, go to college, so that Hispanic culture might mean something. Because people grow through education... if there is no education, we Latinos will be a group at the fourth level of society. We won’t amount to anything and the whole time they will be trampling on us, they will have their feet on our heads. Thus the watchword, not only for the youth but for everyone, is prepare and study.

Page 84: Well, at the least, someone who comes here from there has to make use of the culture here, and if s/he wants to learn to become part of the society, well there are schools where one can prepare oneself to learn English—not a perfect English, but a more informal English, as it may be. It depends on one’s capacity and at the least their aspirations. What happens here is that you cannot dedicate all your time to work; you also have to dedicate sometime to yourself personally, so that you can have an introduction into the society here. This habit of working like a lunatic, from day to night—you can take out two hours and go to school, so that you can learn a few words of English and become integrated into life here little by little... It’s very difficult, but there have to be sacrifices.


