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Enemy Within, Enemy Without: Dominican Attitudes Toward Haitians Before and After the Earthquake of January 12, 2010

Maria B. Clark

University of Miami, maria.braden@gmail.com

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ENEMY WITHIN, ENEMY WITHOUT: DOMINICAN ATTITUDES TOWARD
HAITIANS BEFORE AND AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE OF JANUARY 12, 2010

By

Maria Braden Clark

A THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty
of the University of Miami
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

Coral Gables, Florida

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ENEMY WITHIN, ENEMY WITHOUT: DOMINICAN ATTITUDES TOWARD
HAITIANS BEFORE AND AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE OF JANUARY 12, 2010

Maria Braden Clark

Approved:

Joseph Uscinski, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Political Science

Terri A. Scandura, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School

Sallie L. Hughes, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Journalism

Thomas D. Boswell, Ph.D.
Professor of Geography

CLARK, MARIA BRADEN

(M.A., Latin American Studies)

Enemy Within, Enemy Without:
Dominican Attitudes Toward Haitians
Before and After the Earthquake of
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There has long been tension between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, two nations begrudgingly linked by the geographic constraints of a shared island, differing in their economic status, way of life, and how they perceive themselves and each other. This tension springs from conflicts over land, the lingering perceived threat of Haiti's occupation of the Dominican Republic in the mid-1800s, the discourse of the Trujillo dictatorship that rejected Haiti as a means by which to forge national unity, and ongoing Haitian labor migration that has its roots in the emergence of the Dominican sugar industry. This thesis performs a content analysis of letters to the editor by coding major themes found in the Dominican Republic's *Listín Diario* online newspaper one year before and two years after the earthquake that devastated Haiti on January 12th of 2010. These data are used to determine how media representations of Dominican attitudes toward Haitians are affected by this disaster, and therefore provide insight into Dominican attitudes themselves.

For my mother, who always said just keep writing, and my father, who made it possible
for me to be here.

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INTRODUCTION

“What is the interest in linking us in the same package, if we are two sister nations, but distinct, with different cultures, religions and customs?” asks Dominican legislator Vinicio Semán in his editorial to the *Listín Diario* newspaper in April of 2009¹. These two small nations, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, share the island of Hispaniola in what has long been a marriage of inconvenience. The Dominican Republic was colonized by the Spanish, and Haiti by the French. Haiti overthrew its colonizers in 1804, several years after the Haitian Revolution that “launched the largest slave revolt in history.”² The Dominican Republic declared itself independent from Spain in 1821.³ Haiti occupied the Dominican Republic from 1822 to 1844,⁴ and in 1937, Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo ordered the massacre—by machete—at least twenty thousand Haitians living in the Dominican Republic.⁵

The Dominican Republic has a relatively stable economic position in comparison to Haiti’s widespread poverty, a greater abundance of natural resources, a relatively open border, and a demand for low-wage workers in sugar plantations and in construction, making it a desirable destination for Haitians emigrants. The relationship between these two countries is fraught with the emotional baggage of prejudice, resentment, and unwanted obligation, but also a desire for solidarity.

¹ All letters in my data set were accessed on the *Listín Diario* website at <http://www.listin.com.do/>. All excerpts were translated from the Spanish by Maria B. Clark.

² Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2012, p. 5.

³ Joanne Mariner, “Dominican Republic: ‘Illegal People:’ Haitians and Dominico-Haitians in the Dominican Republic.” New York: Human Rights Watch, 2002, p. 8.

⁴ Ernesto Sagás, *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000, p. 28.

⁵ Paraphrase of Lauren Derby, *The Dictator’s Seduction: Politics and the Popular Imagination in the Era of Trujillo*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009, p. 2.

A magnitude 7.3 earthquake—“one of the deadliest earthquakes in modern history”⁶—struck the western part of the island of Hispaniola on January 12, 2010, barely affecting the Dominican Republic but devastating its neighbor, Haiti. This catastrophe inspired an outpouring of Dominican aid to Haiti.⁷

By performing a content analysis of Dominican editorial letters in one of the Dominican Republic’s main newspapers before and after the earthquake, I will examine the effect of this earthquake on media representations of Dominican attitudes toward Haiti and toward Haitians. I seek to determine whether there is a change in these attitudes toward Haitians after the earthquake, and whether that change appears to be temporary or long term.

I collected editorials and opinion letters from the online edition of the Dominican newspaper *Listín Diario* from January 12, 2009 through January 12, 2012 using the search term “*haitiano*” and narrowing the field to Opinions and Editorials. I coded these letters manually on the basis of six themes: Peaceful Invasion, Haitianization, Threat to National Identity, Burden, We Should Help Haiti, and We Should Work Together with Haiti.

While an analysis of such a limited data set of elite content cannot claim to be able to revolutionize understandings about Dominican attitudes toward Haitians and Dominican-Haitians, looking into this content will provide a more multi-layered vision of the Dominican perspective toward Haiti, and therefore provide insight that goes beyond simplistic allusions to anti-Haitianism and racial hatred.

⁶ Dubois, p. 3.

⁷ “Dominican Republic Aid to Haiti Eases Historic Tensions.” January 13, 2010, http://articles.cnn.com/2010-01-13/world/haiti.earthquake.dominican.republic_1_dominican-republic-haitian-rafael-trujillo?_s=PM:WORLD. Accessed on March 27, 2012.

CHAPTER 1: THEORY AND RELATED LITERATURE

A month after the earthquake that struck Haiti in January of 2010, Dominican writer, essayist, and politician Tony Raful wrote an elegy in the *Listín Diario* for a poet dying from earthquake-related injuries: “Jacques was Haitian; he belonged to 3% of the Haitian population that is not exactly of the black race. Jacques was mulatto; he had yellow or green eyes, depending on the light of the sea or the trees.” His father “was a well-built man, tall, strong, white, he had been a presidential candidate of the Republic of Haiti. . . .”

Why does this writer—in what seems to be a heartfelt tribute to an artist and a lament on the loss of so much life and talent in the wake of the disaster—feel the compulsion to describe this man as “not exactly black,” note that he has light-colored eyes, and mention that his father was white?

Among all the mangled gifts of misery and bondage that the Caribbean people inherited from their European colonizers, perhaps the most insidious is the denigration of their own skin. In the Dominican Republic, this means figuring out “how to reconcile the dominant presence of an African-descended population with a nationally held Eurocentric ethnic ideology”⁸

As the aftermath of destruction left by the 2010 earthquake lingers into the third year of picking up the pieces, the relationship between Haiti and the Dominican Republic is more relevant than ever before, and the balancing act that determines immigration policies and legislation affecting Haitian immigrants in the Dominican Republic is precarious.

⁸ Sheridan Wigginton, “Blackness as a Barrier to Citizenship and Education: Situating the Example of Dilcia Yean and Violeta Bosico,” *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*. 5. 163-170, July 2010, p. 193.

Racial politics and immigration policies in the Dominican Republic have left stateless numerous Dominicans of Haitian descent and without recourse to obtain proof of citizenship, and consequently they cannot access public health care and education: “The prevalent anti-Haitian bias that shapes much of Dominican identity works to prevent civil registry officials from issuing birth certificates to those who, in their estimation, do not ‘look Dominican enough.’”⁹ Such policies have deprived numerous ethnic Haitians and their children of education, healthcare, and other opportunities of civil life, augmenting the underclass that already exists in the Haitian-Dominican population, and provoking international concerns about human rights violations, as well as unheeded United Nations mandates to address these concerns.

Such policies have come to a head in last decade. In 1997, the parents of two Dominican girls of Haitian descent sued to acquire documents proving their daughters’ Dominican citizenship in order for them to have access to public school. The civil registry refused to give them birth certificates despite proof that they were born in the Dominican Republic and that their mothers were Dominican. One of the sisters had been expelled from school for not possessing the necessary documentation.¹⁰ In 2010, the January 26th implementation of a new constitution (approved in October of 2009) denied “children born on Dominican soil to immigrant parents ‘residing illegally’ in the country their legal claim to Dominican nationality.”¹¹

⁹ Wigginton, p. 167.

¹⁰ Wigginton, p. 168.

¹¹ Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights, “Introduction” from “Memo: Constitutional Changes in the Dominican Republic,” <http://www.rfkcenter.org/node/471>. Accessed on November 23, 2011.

This legislation continues to prevent ethnic Haitians from obtaining basic services. Since the 1980s, previous versions of the constitution and other laws have denied birthright citizenship to ethnic Haitians born in the Dominican Republic, with these efforts increasing since 2004, when the Migration Law passed that year defined that “children born on Dominican soil of non-citizen parents are deemed ‘in transit’ and do not gain citizenship, regardless of the length of time their parents have lived in the country,”¹² and often regardless of whether their parents, too, were born on Dominican soil; the same law was used to retroactively denationalize and deny birth certificates and national identity cards to many Dominicans of Haitian ancestry.¹³ These two recent changes are in violation of “both international law and the Dominican Constitution.”¹⁴

Despite the turmoil of recent years, and the often negative sentiment of Dominicans toward Haitian immigrants, the government of the Dominican Republic, despite its own relatively high levels of poverty, responded rapidly after the earthquake hit, allowing injured Haitians into Dominican hospitals¹⁵ and dispatching to Haiti “mobile kitchens capable of serving 100,000 meals a day, 39 trucks with ready-to-eat food, 46 doctors, including 10 trauma specialists, eight mobile clinics and tonnes of

¹² Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights, “Recent Developments” from “Memo: Constitutional Changes in the Dominican Republic,” <http://www.rfkcenter.org/node/471>. Accessed on November 23, 2011.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights, “Violations of International Law.” from Ibid.

¹⁵ Randal C. Archibold, “As Refugees From Haiti Linger, Dominicans’ Good Will Fades.” *The New York Times*, August 31, 2011. Accessed on April 20, 2012.

water, vaccines, rehydrating solutions, and painkillers.”¹⁶ They also closed the border with Haiti in response to the cholera outbreak in Haiti of late 2010.¹⁷

The Dominican Republic, as a Caribbean nation, exists within four worlds: that of the colonizer, that of the colonized, that of a nation that shares an island with Haiti, and as part of a larger global context. This global context is one of enduring negrophobia in which “[b]lackness produces . . . a *global anti-Black racism*, which stems from the logics of the transatlantic slave trade and continues into our contemporary moment in almost every nation of the world.”¹⁸ Race is not static, but a fluid concept, a cultural definition of self and other that is “elastic and transformable,”¹⁹ “subjectively real, or as real as people want or believe it to be,”²⁰ “fabricated and contested,”²¹ and “first and foremost a political concept.”²²

Race is shaped according to class, status, education, and location. The nature of race in the Caribbean shifts from island to island, dependent on context for meaning. Martínez notes that: “While anti-Black racism is a constant between the Caribbean and the United States, who counts as Black changes dramatically. We find that, while the category of *Blackness* is flexible and changing, whoever falls in that category is

¹⁶ Elizabeth Roebling, “Haiti-Dominican Republic: Sisters in catastrophe,” *IPS - Inter Press Service*, January 15, 2010, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/192370655?accountid=14585>. Accessed on March 27, 2012.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Roebling, “Haiti-Dominican Republic: Cholera Chokes off Border Trade,” *IPS - Inter Press Service*, January 17, 2011, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/840657475?accountid=14585>. Accessed on April 22, 2012.

¹⁸ Mark Sawyer, “We Didn’t Cross the Color Line, the Color Line Crossed Us,” *Du Bois Review*, 4:2, 303-315, November 1, 2007, p. 304.

¹⁹ Silvio Torres-Saillant, “Inventing the Race: Latinos and the Ethnoracial Pentagon,” *Latino Studies*, 1, 123-151, 2003, p. 124.

²⁰ David Howard, *Coloring the Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic*, Oxford: Boulder, Colo.: Signal Books; L. Rienner Publishers, 2001, p. 5.

²¹ Torres-Saillant, 2003, p. 124.

²² Howard, 2001, p. 154.

universally placed at the bottom of social hierarchies.”²³ Regardless of where in the Caribbean one is located, blackness is considered to be the bottom rung of the sociocultural ladder, which is demonstrated by such expressions as “*mejorando la raza* (bettering the race) and *buena apariencia* (good appearance) [that] are commonly understood phrases used throughout the region that convey disdain for, if not aversion to, blackness.”²⁴

In the Dominican Republic, “black” hair is considered “bad” hair unless straightened²⁵ and there are “greater social and economic opportunities for people with lighter-colored skin.”²⁶ Haitians represent the “perpetual *Other*”²⁷ and occasionally when applied to cane-cutters working on the lower end of Dominican society, are looked down upon as “patently subhuman.”²⁸ It is impossible to understand another country’s relationship with race without having spent several years living there, so we must tread carefully when presenting the debate over how prevalent anti-Haitianism is in the Dominican Republic. Further, it is important to understand that the definition of anti-Haitianism hinges not just on a racial understanding of Haitians but on a whole host of cultural and national markers. Dominican elites played a large part in this: “[T]he Dominican elites still professed their anti-Haitian and antiblack prejudices, in part because they reflected their personal view of what Haiti was, and also because they employed antihaitianismo ideology as an element of national cohesion and domination.

²³ Sawyer, p. 305.

²⁴ “*Mejorando la raza* is a reference to the practice of intentionally marrying a person of lighter skin complexion in order to produce offspring that, in a sense, will dilute the appearance of blackness in *la raza*.” From Wigginton, p. 164.

²⁵ Casandra Badillo, “Only My Hairdresser Knows for Sure: Stories of Race, Hair and Gender.” *NACLA Report on the Americas*. 34:6, May/June 2001, p. 35.

²⁶ Howard, 2001, p. 68.

²⁷ Sawyer, p. 308.

²⁸ Lauren Derby, “Haitians, Magic, and Money: Raza and Society in the Haitian-Dominican Borderlands, 1900-1937,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 36:3, 488-526, July 1994, p. 493.

These prejudices were reproduced at a popular level, and being Dominican soon became identified with being formally anti-Haitian.”²⁹

Anti-Haitianism certainly has a great deal to do with contemporary elite prejudices, but at its root can be traced back to colonial times. As Derby notes: “Anti-Haitianism does not fit most models of race or ethnicity, as it retains traces of its meaning as a species of racialized nationalism.”³⁰ She observes that an initial understanding of this concept comes from the distinct ways in which these two countries were colonized, arising “initially as consciousness of colonial difference, an identity marked first by language (French versus Spanish). . . .”³¹

Haiti and the Dominican Republic were colonized by the French and Spanish, respectively, but in 1822, Haiti took over the eastern part of the island, or what is the modern-day Dominican Republic. The overthrow of Haiti twenty-two years later in 1844 established the modern Dominican state and the Dominican Independence Day via this break with Haiti, not, as one might assume, via the Dominican Republic’s break with its Spanish colonizers.³² This distinction highlights a historical trajectory that defined Haiti as the enemy other from day one: “From its inception, then, the Dominican nation (particularly as constructed by its elites) has literally been based on the rejection of Haiti.”³³

²⁹ Sagás, p. 35.

³⁰ Derby, 1994, p. 496.

³¹ Ibid., p. 506.

³² Samuel Martínez, “From Hidden Hand to Heavy Hand: Sugar, the State, and Migrant Labor in Haiti and the Dominican Republic,” *Latin American Research Review*, 34:1, 57-84, March 1, 1999, p. 61.

³³ Edward Paulino, “Anti-Haitianism, Historical Memory, and the Potential for Genocidal Violence in the Dominican Republic,” *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, 1:3, 265-288, December 2006, p. 269.

Even though, as Martínez observes, “Haiti did not in fact *invade* the East in 1822 but was instead invited to enter,”³⁴ and in doing so helped abolish the institution of slavery: “the transformations provoked by the Haitian Revolution and the Haitian occupation all provided the conditions under which successive generations of Dominicans were able to liberate themselves from slavery and constitute a vital, independent peasantry.”³⁵ In this way, the outcry against the Haitian occupation “would endure in the Dominican historical memory [with] Haitians as invaders.”³⁶ While Sagás calls this a “nationalist Dominican ‘false consciousness,’”³⁷ it is also true that when Haiti withdrew in 1844, “the Haitian armies left a trail of blood . . . [and] ransacked all the towns in their path, killing many of their inhabitants.”³⁸ The bitterness over this break with Haiti remains present in the Dominican Republic today, particularly in discourses that evoke fear over another potential invasion by the Haitians, or over the “peaceful” invasion that is perceived to be enacted by way of Haitian immigration to the Dominican Republic.

The Haitian occupation and the Dominican break with Haiti is kept alive in the collective memory,³⁹ partly as a way to evoke a false nostalgia for Spain (a “‘Spanish Fantasy Heritage,’ that evokes a glorious past while omitting mention of former

³⁴ Samuel Martínez, “Not a Cockfight,” *Latin American Perspectives*, 30:3, 80-101, May 1, 2003, p. 85.

³⁵ Richard Turits, *Foundations of Despotism: Peasants, the Trujillo Regime, and Modernity in Dominican History*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003, p. 49.

³⁶ Paulino, p. 269.

³⁷ Sagás, p. 21.

³⁸ Sagás, p. 28.

³⁹ With regard to the power of collective memory and past suffering, Joanna Vollhardt notes: “Through narratives of violence against one’s group in the past, historical trauma is relived. This may give rise to shame, rage, and entrenched intergroup violence. . . . These narratives can even refer to victimization that occurred centuries ago, yet still arouse intense feelings of anger and humiliation that fuel cycles of revenge and ethno-political conflict in the present.” From Joanna Vollhardt’s “Altruism Born of Suffering and Prosocial Behavior Following Adverse Life Events: A Review and Conceptualization,” *Social Justice Research*, 22:1, 53-97, 2009, p. 57.

inequities.⁴⁰), and partly as a way to draw a line of demarcation between the Dominican Republic and Haiti and declare that Haiti is all that the Dominican Republic is not :
 “While Afro-Dominicans comprise the largest racial population in the country, and black cultural practices—such as Dominican Vodú—are important components of national culture, these practices are not recognized within official versions of Dominican uniqueness that affirm the nationalist myth that Dominican culture is exclusively white, Spanish, and Catholic.”⁴¹

In a global context of negrophobia, and in light of an undesirable slave past, whiteness became a way to overthrow or transform a traumatic history of a slave past: “The descendants of Dominican slave society wished to distance themselves from the legacy of enforced servitude. The necessitated the denial of African slave ancestry and the forging of a contemporary identity which marginalized *negritud*.”⁴² Despite many shared ancestral roots between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, such as the above-mentioned black cultural practices, the Dominican Republic was eager to distinguish itself from Haiti, and in doing so distinguish themselves from an association with blackness: “Dominican nationalism has been colored by a pervasive racism, centered on the rejection of African ancestry and blackness.”⁴³

An imperialist world order built upon the norms of scientific racism (at least in Europe and the Americas)⁴⁴ dictated that any association with blackness was unpalatable.

⁴⁰ Torres-Saillant, 2003, p. 142.

⁴¹ Robert L. Adams, “History at the Crossroads: Vodú and the Modernization of the Dominican Borderland,” in *Globalization and Race: Transformations in the Cultural Production of Blackness*, edited by Kamari Maxine Clarke and Deborah A. Thomas, Durham: Duke University Press, 2006, p. 56.

⁴² Howard, 2001, p. 45.

⁴³ Howard, 2001, p. 2.

⁴⁴ Turits, p. 150.

Dominicans had to find a way to circumvent their own black ancestry in order to compete globally. This was done in two ways: by casting off connections with blackness by imposing them on someone else, and by redefining their ancestry in a way that separated them from the semantic associations of blackness. In this way, the Dominican Republic was able to make black, “other.” Blackness was reconstructed to signify that which was Haitian and other, an “unwanted outsider.”⁴⁵ By framing Haiti as “black” and placing itself outside of that frame, the Dominican Republic was able to articulate to the world its “not blackness.”

Descended from a colonial society in which color was broken down into 128 separate categories in which even 127 white parts and one black part had a name, “the sang-mêlé,” and “was still a man of color,”⁴⁶ Dominicans still define themselves in a myriad of ways that avoid use of descriptors relating to blackness. As Howard notes, this distinction has less to do with wanting to be white and more to do with wanting to be not Haitian (and presumably not black): “Many Dominicans are more concerned to disassociate themselves from Haiti than to claim ‘white lineage.’ A plethora of terms is used to avoid the implication of African ancestry. *Trigueno/a*, *rosadito/a*, *destenido/a*, *rubio/a*, *cenizo/a* respectively refer to skin color as wheat-colored, rosy, faded, blond or fair, and dark or ashen.”⁴⁷ As Wigginton notes, Dominican categorization of race is not like that of the United States’ black-white dichotomy; “the Dominican Republic employs

⁴⁵ Sawyer, p. 304.

⁴⁶ Catherine Orenstein, “Illegal Transnational Labor: Mexicans in California and Haitians in the Dominican Republic,” *Journal of International Affairs*, 48:2, 601 March 31, 1995, p. 614.

⁴⁷ Howard, 2001, p. 9.

a host of descriptive categories that draws on a seemingly infinite number of combinations of skin color, facial features and hair texture.”⁴⁸

The Dominican Republic was able to jettison its own blackness onto Haiti by defining Haiti as the only black republic of the island and by redefining itself as all that was not Haitian, “in opposition to Haiti.”⁴⁹ Derby notes: “The Dominican Republic has a history of defining its national identity in relation to Haiti.”⁵⁰ Haiti, while certainly not free from the deeply-rooted color prejudices found in the Dominican Republic, is distinct from its neighbor in a defining way: the post-revolutionary constitution of 1805 declared that all Haitians would “henceforth only be known generically as blacks.”⁵¹ In contrast, the Dominican Republic emphasized “its Hispanic and Mestizo (Indian and Spanish populace) and defining itself as racially distinct from its Black neighbor, Haiti.”⁵² The Dominican Republic characterized itself as the not-Haiti in order to highlight its distinct racial make-up. Dominicans also used the term “raza” to redefine themselves as Hispanic and not-black.

Aside from reshaping its national identity in contrast to Haiti, by framing themselves as part of different ethnic group (or “raza”),⁵³ and as Catholic and Hispanic versus practitioners of African religious rites, a central way in which the Dominican Republic redefined its blackness and attempted to circumvent its African heritage was through the use of the word, “*indio*.” A history as descendants of African slaves and

⁴⁸ Wigginton, p. 164.

⁴⁹ Wigginton, p. 164.

⁵⁰ Derby, 1994, p. 491.

⁵¹ Dubois, p. 43.

⁵² Sawyer, p. 306.

⁵³ Derby, 1994, p. 513.

white colonizers was rewritten by Trujillo into a history as descendants of Taino Indians who were native to the island of Hispaniola prior to being totally wiped out by the conquistadors.⁵⁴ In order to erase or rewrite a slave past and an African ancestry, the Dominican dictator, Trujillo, used “*indio*,” to explain Dominican color and to therefore invent a new Dominican “race.” In order to be able to “whiten” themselves and “varnish their common African past, the Dominican people essentially dropped the words *black* and *mulatto* from their vocabulary and replaced them with the less traumatic and more socially desirable *indio*.”⁵⁵ In this way, the Dominicans—in particular this was an elite desire—could forget “a past characterized by economic dependency, political disorder, and cultural hybridity, all considered obstacles to the glorious future that was waiting right around the corner.”⁵⁶

For Trujillo, this bright white future “heralded a genocidal campaign.”⁵⁷ Racial redefinition and reassignment of blackness as the Haitian other became the most convenient way to “purify” the nation and its people of a complicated history of oppression, to shake lose the chains of yesterday and become new and modern, hiding the past in the backyard, and presenting a “white, respectable face to the world” while hiding the “secret that they may be ‘black behind the ears.’”⁵⁸

When Trujillo rose to power at the height of the sugar boom in the 1930s, Haitians workers were “the majority of the harvest labor force”⁵⁹ in the sugar bateyes. Practices reminiscent of slavery were used to maintain this source of cheap and

⁵⁴ Derby, 2009, p. 200.

⁵⁵ Sagás, p. 35.

⁵⁶ Adams, p. 71.

⁵⁷ Adams, p. 72.

⁵⁸ Derby, 2009, p. 266.

⁵⁹ Martínez, 1999, p. 66.

manageable labor. Haitian laborers were tricked into entering the Dominican Republic, kidnapped,⁶⁰ or “rounded up” by the military and left stranded on sugar bateyes, “where hunger forced them to work as cane cutters.”⁶¹ Jean-Claude Duvalier, who was president of Haiti in the 1970s and early 1980s, “extorted two million dollars a year from the Dominican Republic for permission to recruit cane cutters in Haiti”⁶² because Dominican need for Haitian hands to harvest sugar was so great.

In 1937, Trujillo massacred tens of thousands of Haitians in the frontier and elsewhere in the Dominican Republic without warning. In what came to be referred to as the “*corte*,”⁶³ or “cutting,” conspicuously avoiding sugar plantations, where no doubt the economic interests of the Dominican Republic outweighed Trujillo’s violent racist agenda.

Samuel Martínez notes that “insufficient research has been given to why and when anti-haitianismo became so important” and observes: “Although anti-Haitian feeling may not be the creation of elite discourse and certainly predated Trujillo, it surely owes its prominence in Dominican culture and politics largely to government propaganda during and after the Trujillo regime.”⁶⁴ Scholarly sources paint a pre-Trujillo picture, not of an idealistic paradise, but of a “vibrantly bicultural and transnational”⁶⁵ border community built around two cultures interacting on a daily basis for trade, companionship, and marriage in which “Dominican-born Haitians were more or less accepted as Dominican citizens and as members of a multiethnic national community.”⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Orenstein, p. 614.

⁶¹ Martínez, 1999, p. 72.

⁶² Martínez, 1999, p. 80.

⁶³ Martínez, 1999, p. 70.

⁶⁴ Martínez, 2003, p. 82.

⁶⁵ Turits, p. 146.

⁶⁶ Turits, p. 163.

Derby notes that (prior to the 1940s) “border Dominicans did not hold an univocal set of negative stereotypes related to Haiti and Haitians. Most of the Dominican border residents visited Haiti frequently.”⁶⁷ Common bonds ran so deep that the soldiers charged with carrying out the massacre were “sickened by their bloody task” had to get “blind drunk” in order to slay their ethnic Haitians neighbors.

Atypically for a genocide, the Trujillist state did not espouse an anti-Haitian ideology before the massacre; it instead became entrenched after the fact: “Although not a central or trumpeted policy, the state took clear steps in the pre-1937 period to integrate ethnic Haitians (as well as ethnic Dominicans) in the frontier into urban Dominican culture and society. . . .”⁶⁸ In most situations of ethnic or racial tension that result in a genocide, there are warning signs, but not with the Haitian genocide. Trujillo’s advisers were promoting anti-Haitian ideology before he vocalized it himself, which did not happen until after the massacre. In fact, as noted by Turits, Trujillo sought early on to “gain support among the people of Haiti. His efforts included “financial support for Haitian artists, intellectuals, political leaders, and newspapers. . . . [he] declared his love for the Haitian people, and dramatically kissed the Haitian flag.” Turits sees these actions as potentially having been out of a desire to “gain control over the Haitian state and people.”⁶⁹

Trujillo’s elite team of “intellectuals” helped establish an anti-Haitian ideology that tied in with nationalism. Joaquín Balaguer, who went on to be president of the Dominican Republic three times expresses in his book, *The Island of Dreams*, “his fear that Haitians will disintegrate the ‘moral and ethnic values’ of the Dominican family, and

⁶⁷ Derby, 1994, p. 513.

⁶⁸ Turits, p. 163.

⁶⁹ Turits, p. 160.

that this phenomenon, ‘if it is not stemmed in time, will, in the end, facilitate the absorption of the Dominican Republic by Haiti.’”⁷⁰ Another well-known adviser, Manuel Arturo Peña Batlle, noted in a disturbingly evocative snake in the grass metaphor: “Know this well, Minister, as soon as the Haitians stop fearing us, they will bite us: silently, quietly, without you or anyone knowing about it.”⁷¹ Sagás refers to Peña Battle as representing “the zenith of antihaitianismo ideology.”⁷² These same ideals were used to justify the massacre after the fact.

Yet, as with all things Dominican-Haitian, the philosophy that justified the massacre is not uncomplicated. The same advisers who “demonized popular Haitian culture, and Vodou in particular, as a threat to Dominican nationality, and represented the Haitian presence in the Dominican frontier as a ‘pacific invasion,’”⁷³ were “rumored to have governed in consultation with Haitian spiritual leaders. Whether or not these rumors are true is less important than that Dominicans widely accept them to be true.”⁷⁴

By all accounts, Trujillo was a megalomaniac who mimicked Hitler by “wearing a greatcoat and jackboots (unusual attire for the tropics),” made members of the “only legal political party, greet each other with a kind of “Sieg Heil” salute”⁷⁵ and bleached his skin with rice powder to look whiter,⁷⁶ perhaps to distance himself from his known (and even advertised on the Haitian side of the border prior to the massacre) family history of a Haitian grandmother.⁷⁷ He rewrote textbooks to portray Haiti and Haitians in a negative

⁷⁰ Orenstein, p. 615.

⁷¹ Sagás, p. 49.

⁷² Sagás p. 50.

⁷³ Turits, p. 151.

⁷⁴ Martínez, 2003, p. 91.

⁷⁵ Eric Roorda, *The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1945*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1998, p. 133.

⁷⁶ Claire Kew, “Blanchissez-Moi Tous Ces Nègres,” *MLN*, 125:4, September 1, 2010, p. 990.

⁷⁷ Derby, 2009, p. 199.

and racially inferior light.⁷⁸ Trujillo capitalized on the idea of the Haitian as “other” as a way to intertwine nationalist pride with the exclusion of blackness from the Dominican identity. He redefined “Dominican” by remaking the national identity in the image of Spain: “The Trujillist ideology re-stressed the Dominican Republic as an Hispanic, Catholic and white nation. African influences were considered non-Dominican, and, thus, subversive of the state. Haiti was the antithesis of the renovated national image.”⁷⁹

To complete the myth, Trujillo rewrote Dominican origins, bridging the gap between black and white with a term that had no connection to the black African history of the island. The term “*indio*,” or Indian, was “typified by nonwhiteness as well as nonblackness, [and] could easily accommodate the racial in-betweenness of the Dominican mulatto.”⁸⁰ Being not black, and being modern in order to fit into the global world also meant that a new term had to be invented to reinvent the Dominican.

This term evoked a nonexistent but alluring native past “with deep roots in the prehistory of the island;” the idea that Dominicans had originated on the island of Hispaniola and not from the painful intersection of the colonizer and the enslaved, which gave the nation “a sense of continuity and helped it repress its traumatic colonial history.”⁸¹ To Derby, this re-contextualized blackness is a “latent secret,”⁸² or what Torres-Saillant calls “a racial cover-up,” a way to allow people to hide the black beneath a new name that “somatically distances itself from being black”⁸³ and therefore from a slave past and contemporary racial inequality. Trujillo offered the chance to remedy that

⁷⁸ Wigginton, p. 166.

⁷⁹ Howard, 2001, p. 31.

⁸⁰ Silvio Torres-Saillant, “The Tribulations of Blackness,” *Latin American Perspectives*, 25:3, 126-146, May 1, 1998, p. 139.

⁸¹ Sagás, p. 39.

⁸² Derby, 2009, p. 24.

⁸³ Howard, 2001, p. 43.

racial inequality and provide an anodyne for the painful collective memories of an undesirable past and difficult present. He promised to “create a society with . . . no blackness—one of only Dominicans united against Haitians. . . . the Era of Trujillo thus promised to make whiteness available to all Dominicans by incorporating them into the modern nation.”⁸⁴ He would make Dominicans modern by giving them an uncontested past that they could be proud of.

Creating a modern nation meant literally and figuratively redrawing the borderlines between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. This was done, literally, through the 1936 treaty with the Haitian President Vincent,⁸⁵ and figuratively, using the rising specter of anti-Haitianism to wedge a divide between the two nations that would allow the Dominican Republic to declare its cultural differences from Haiti. Before the massacre, the border was fluid, and “[i]n many senses, the border remained an inconsequential political fiction for frontier residents.”⁸⁶ The Dominican could only cease to be mulatto and begin being *indio* if the division between him and the “black Haiti” was demarcated.

Under Trujillo, nationalism became intertwined with blackness and anti-Haitianism. In this way, he was able to etch out a national identity that depended both on being not Haitian and being not black, to the extent that blackness within the country (as well as outside the country) become explained by association with that which was Haitian, regardless of ethnicity. During Trujillo, “[r]ace and nationality were artificially confused by the state-sponsored ideology of antihaitianismo, which saw threats to the nation and its culture as coming not only from Haiti (the external, foreign enemy) but

⁸⁴ Derby, 2009, p. 24.

⁸⁵ Roorda, p. 133.

⁸⁶ Turits, p. 147.

also from the black population in the Dominican Republic. References were made by the Trujillista intellectuals to the ‘Africanization’ of the country and the ‘Ethiopian’ hordes of Haitian immigrants.”⁸⁷ Part of Trujillo’s success was in the subtlety of his manipulation. As Howard notes, “race becomes coded in the language of nation and culture, aimed at deflecting the negative accusations of racism.”⁸⁸ Embedding race into the language of nationalism made it all the more difficult to detect and all the more treacherous in the enduring structural violence that developed as a consequence of this mindset.

Despite Trujillo’s desire to frame Haiti as distinct from the Dominican Republic through the vehicle of race, the idea of Haiti as other was not created solely by Trujillo, but also by virtue of the two nations existing side by side within the constraints of and subject to the limited natural resources of one small island. A group that finds itself in this sort of situation will denigrate the group that represents its competition in order to promote the survival of its own group: “Race is thus a relational concept, best understood as a relationship . . . between nominal groups competing for social, political, or economic resources.”⁸⁹ The small size of Hispaniola is so small and the distinct cultural differences between Haiti and the Dominican Republic contributes to the great divide between ingroup and outgroup: “A direct relationship between intense ingroup favoritism and outgroup antagonism would be especially true if the categorization is dichotomous, dividing the society into two significant subgroups.”⁹⁰ This dichotomy was already

⁸⁷ Sagás, p. 65.

⁸⁸ Howard, 2001, p. 156.

⁸⁹ Howard, 2007, p. 729.

⁹⁰ Marilynn B. Brewer, “The Psychology of Prejudice: Ingroup Love or Outgroup Hate?”, *Journal of Social Issues*, 55:3, 429-444, 1999, p. 439.

visible in the distinctions between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, and Trujillo manipulated it, reinforcing the differences between the two countries in order to promulgate the role of Haiti as an outgroup and strengthen the perceived threat attached to Haiti. In Sherif and Sherif's Realistic Conflict Theory, the "perception that an outgroup constitutes a threat to ingroup interests or survival creates a circumstance in which identification and interdependence with the ingroup is directly associated with fear and hostility toward the threatening outgroup and vice versa."⁹¹ This threat can be actual or imagined. This is the philosophy behind Trujillo and his advisers' so-called "apprehensions about "invasión pacífica [a peaceful invasion] from Haiti. It was feared that Haiti might insidiously gain hegemony over all of Hispaniola via infiltration by its numerically superior population into Dominican territory."⁹²

Trujillo used the discourse of "other" to blur boundary lines and to elevate the Dominican state above that of Haiti. He and his advisers spread the notion that being Haitian was like a plague that could be "caught" by virtue of proximity: An "anti-Haitian discourse" under Trujillo "became official in the 1940s [and] associated Haitians with all forms of bodily pollution, especially disease and contagion."⁹³ This idea sprang primarily from the elite segment of the Dominican population: "Elite observers assumed that Haitian frontier settlers would not assimilate Dominican ways and would be capable of Haitianizing the Dominicans with whom they came into contact."⁹⁴ Blackness could be structured as part of the looming threat of Haitian identity seeping through the border to tarnish the Dominican identity. By saying that this threat could be halted in its tracks,

⁹¹ Brewer, p. 435.

⁹² Martínez, 1999, p. 70.

⁹³ Derby, 1994, p. 504.

⁹⁴ Martínez, 1999, p. 70.

Trujillo offered the promise of bleaching society of its blackness, reinforcing already existing anti-Haitian ideologies, and giving elites a promise of a whiter, less-Haitian or ideally, Haitian-less society.

Catholicism was one of the main avenues by which Trujillo evoked *Dominicanidad*. Derby notes that Catholicism became important as a narrative partly because it “invoked Spain and *hispanisismo*, which were available and legitimate counter-identities.”⁹⁵ In the mind of Trujillo, that which was Catholic was Spanish and white, and therefore could not also be black and African, two things that were associated in his mind with voodoo. Turits notes that despite the African cultural inheritance clearly evident in the Dominican Republic, “‘Haitianization’ increasingly became the means by which supposedly backward and African dimensions of Dominican culture and society and Haitian-Dominican norms in the Dominican frontier were explained by Dominican intellectuals.”⁹⁶ History was rewritten with the Dominicans Catholics to the exclusion of all other (non-Hispanic) religions. This notion was reinforced by “Catholic priests [who] stressed the Hispanic and Catholic character of the Dominican people in their sermons, thus helping reproduce antihaitianismo ideology.”⁹⁷ That which was not Catholic could not, therefore, be Dominican. Since anti-haitianismo ideology was based on the idea that black was bottom of the food chain, it is rather discouraging to know that the church supported this, and even more disheartening to learn that the “Jesuits were present in the region during the 1937 massacre, yet none of them made any mention of the killings.”⁹⁸ In order to remove what was not Dominican, he attempted to undermine and erase what

⁹⁵ Derby, 2009, p. 57.

⁹⁶ Turits, p. 150.

⁹⁷ Sagás, p. 59.

⁹⁸ Sagás, p. 60.

was African by promoting white supremacist views⁹⁹ and making “African religious and cultural rites” illegal,¹⁰⁰ and literally tried to whiten Dominican genes by inviting European immigration in the hopes that intermarriage would have this effect.¹⁰¹

But Trujillo, however harmful he was to attitudes in the Dominican Republic, could not have been the sole cause of anti-Haitianism: “The Trujillo regime and its intellectuals did not invent antihaitianismo; it was already an integral part of Dominican culture. What the Trujillo regime did was to take antihaitianismo to new intellectual heights and convert it into a state-sponsored ideology.”¹⁰² The stage for Trujillo’s madness was already set with the past history of the United States’ involvement in the Dominican Republic. I aim to avoid a paternalistic and colonialist portrayal of the situation that implies the Dominican Republic is not capable of forming its own opinions about things, it nevertheless seems clear that to a large extent, the U.S. occupation of the Dominican Republic and its influence as a world power impacted societal attitudes towards blackness in the Dominican Republic.

The roots of anti-Haitianism were sunk deep in the Spanish colonial mindset, and in the aberrant negrophobia of the scribes of the ruling class from colonial times to the present.”¹⁰³ However, outside influence cannot be spared some of the blame for this, including the early 20th century U.S. occupation of Haiti, which predated Trujillo’s rule by over a decade. The U.S. invaded the country for eight years from 1916 on¹⁰⁴ and took

⁹⁹ Torres-Saillant, 1998, p. 132.

¹⁰⁰ Sawyer, p. 306.

¹⁰¹ Kimberly Simmons, “Navigating the Racial Terrain: Blackness and Mixedness in the United States and the Dominican Republic,” *Transforming Anthropology*, 16:2, 95-111, October 1, 2008, p. 101.

¹⁰² Sagás, p. 46.

¹⁰³ Torres-Saillant, 1998, p. 133.

¹⁰⁴ Adams, p. 61.

over Dominican customs control in 1907.¹⁰⁵ While this is just one perspective, Derby credits the U.S. with creating the “black problem” in the Dominican Republic.¹⁰⁶ It is possible that “the consciousness of a population of outsiders in the border population began as a result of American efforts to classify that population.”¹⁰⁷

One of Trujillo’s U.S.-educated advisers and “an experienced observed of American social conditions and class attitudes” suggested that in order to accommodate himself to a more United States–oriented mindset, Trujillo should “emphasize ‘that illegal Haitian penetration seriously obstructed the Dominican Government’s aim to improve the low Dominican standard of living; to defend the clean, traditional customs of our citizens; to protect Dominican property on the frontier from Haitian bandits; and to preserve our racial superiority over them.’”¹⁰⁸ Easily seen here is the narrative of white Hispanic Catholic versus voodoo-practicing and ethnically African Haitians as bearers of unwanted culture that is characterized as infectious disease; the Haitian as criminal; the Haitian as black and therefore inferior.

The idea of the Dominican Republic wanting to “whiten” itself to fit into a global context of negrophobia was both promoted and reinforced by the United States at every turn. When the United States considered annexing the Dominican Republic in the late 19th century, it noted as one positive that “generally in the mixed race the white blood predominates,”¹⁰⁹ that “there is a universal desire that the black be obliterated by the white,”¹¹⁰ and the racial composition of the Dominican Republic is somehow not as black

¹⁰⁵ Derby, 2009, p. 57.

¹⁰⁶ Derby 2009, p. 53.

¹⁰⁷ Derby, 1994, p. 505.

¹⁰⁸ Roorda, p. 136.

¹⁰⁹ Torres-Saillant, 1998, p. 128.

¹¹⁰ Torres-Saillant, 1998, p. 129.

as the rest of the Caribbean and by virtue of this fact, they must receive “official recognition ... [from the global powers] “to prevent ‘the further spread of negro influence in the West Indies.’”¹¹¹

Derby notes that during the occupation by the United States, there was an increased frequency of complaints of Haitianization of the border during what she aptly calls the “Americanization of the border,” and that “[t]his implies that a newly heightened concept of national identity resulting from the gradual surrender of national sovereignty to the United States, which Dominicans could not control, was displaced and redirected toward Haiti, a problem over which they had some control.”¹¹² This is an interesting read on malice towards Haitians that again frames the Dominican Republic as the nation trying to elevate itself above its “outgroup” neighbor. Her reading also implies that negative attitudes toward Haitians were promoted by—rather than coinciding with—the U.S. presence in the Dominican Republic.

The United States also refused to play a role of any sternness toward Trujillo in the aftermath of the massacre, which might have tempered anti-Haitian attitudes. An American newspaper writer—who himself does not grasp the extent of the slaughter—at the time noted President Roosevelt’s reaction, which at best, comes across as barely-a-wrist-slap and at worst, as tacit approval Trujillo’s actions:

“Washington’s main concern has been to prevent war between the two countries, and that is understandable. But what of its announced determination to preen the growth of fascism in the Western Hemisphere? . . . A thorough investigation by the mediators that identified and indicted the murders of the 10,000 would have an excellent effect on the little Hitlers of South and Central America. Instead Trujillo is now in a position to whitewash a major crime—the concurrence of all “good neighbors.”¹¹³

¹¹¹ Torres-Saillant, 1998, p. 127.

¹¹² Derby, 1995, p. 500.

¹¹³ Roorda, p. 140.

By using the narrative for which he was coached U.S.-educated advisers, and framing the massacre as national self-defense from an assured cultural invasion by the Haitians, Trujillo managed to get away with the massacre unscathed.¹¹⁴ This narrative continues through to today's politicians in the Dominican Republic, who promote a "virulent and influential anti-Haitian discourse"¹¹⁵ and continue to "speak of a 'pacific invasion' fearing massive migrations of Haitians, ignoring mainly the social and economic contributions of Haitians to the growth and expansion of the sugar industry during the nineteenth century, and to the construction industry during the twentieth and twentieth-first [sic] century."¹¹⁶

This attitude has led to massive bouts of deportation from the Dominican Republic of Haitians and of Dominicans who are ethnically Haitian, many who had been living in the country for generations, as well as, undoubtedly, numerous Dominicans with no Haitian ancestry, as skin color is often used "as a primary indicator" in decisions about whom to deport.¹¹⁷ These deportations took place en masse in the 1990s at the command of then-President Balaguer, who conveniently avoided deporting those of a working age: Within three months [in 1991], around 50,000 Haitians had been deported by the Dominican army, or else had left the country voluntarily to avoid maltreatment. ... The government received popular support for the deportation program."¹¹⁸ Paulino notes the impressive statistic that "[i]n one month in 2004 alone, the Dominican Army, in conjunction with immigration authorities, apprehended and repatriated nearly 2,000

¹¹⁴ Turits, p. 168.

¹¹⁵ Paulino, p. 271.

¹¹⁶ Karin Weyland Usanna, "The Absence of an African Presence in Argentina and the Dominican Republic: Caught between National Folklore and Myth," *Caribbean Studies*, 38:1, 107, January 1, 2010, p. 111.

¹¹⁷ LaToya Tavernier, "The Stigma of Blackness: Anti-Haitianism in the Dominican Republic," *Socialism and Democracy*, 22:3, 96-104, November 2008, p. 196.

¹¹⁸ Howard, 2001, p. 39.

Haitians along the border.”¹¹⁹ Sawyer notes that deportations of this type are important because Latin America does not typically have racial segregation laws, and “the one type of policy where racial hierarchy and racism were made explicit was immigration policy.”¹²⁰ These deportations are often anti-constitutional and have raised concerns about serious human rights violations,¹²¹ but also offer insight into the mindset that not only helps carry out these deportations but also makes them popular among average Dominicans. This anti-Haitian attitude, partly in response to these accusations of human rights violations, culminated in the passage of a law in 2004 that granted “citizenship to those born on Dominican soil of parents from any country *except Haiti*. In 2005, the Dominican Supreme Court upheld this law as constitutional.”¹²²

By performing a content analysis of letters from the Opinion and Editorial sections of *Listín Diario* newspaper, I intended to be able to demonstrate how these media representations of Dominican attitudes toward Haitians might be influenced by the earthquake. In doing so, I could perhaps provide a window of understanding into the mindset behind such attitudes, and into the roots and manifestations of anti-Haitianism. Just as significantly, I wanted to discover whether these attitudes were, indeed, *capable* of change.

Literature on empathy, suffering, and attitude change suggests that there is reason to believe that natural disasters can positively impact attitudes towards victims of these catastrophes. Vollhardt notes that “[i]ndividuals who have suffered are more likely to exhibit prosocial attitudes and behaviors toward outgroup members in need—specifically,

¹¹⁹ Paulino, p. 271.

¹²⁰ Sawyer, p. 304.

¹²¹ Mariner, p. 11.

¹²² Sawyer, p. 310.

victims of a natural disaster in a different part of the world—than those who have not experienced significant adversity.”¹²³ Positive and helping attitudes towards such an attitude are “higher among those who had experienced a similar event type (natural disaster), compared with those who had suffered for other reasons.”¹²⁴

When considering how this research can be applied to the relationship between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, it must be noted that Hispaniola is situated within the greater “active seismic zone” of the Caribbean, and that the island itself rests on “numerous” fault lines, including the “unusual” and parallel conjunction of two major ones.¹²⁵ Earthquakes are not unfamiliar to the people of either side of the island. Additionally, a report was released in 2012 that indicated a potential for the increase in enormous earthquakes in the region. Due to the cyclical nature of shifting fault lines, “Haiti and the Dominican Republic should prepare for future devastating earthquakes.”¹²⁶

With this in mind, one can imagine that the Dominican view toward the Haitian earthquake encapsulates two realizations: one, that the earthquake could have hit the Dominican side of the island instead (or also), and two, that the very real prospect exists for an earthquake of equal magnitude to hit the Dominican Republic in the future. The perspective of “it could have been us” or “it might someday be us” allows the Dominican Republic to put itself in Haiti’s place. As Cuddy notes, taking the perspective of an outgroup “increases perceived similarity and encourages helping responses to outgroup

¹²³ Joanna Vollhardt and Ervin Straub. “Inclusive Altruism Born of Suffering: The Relationship Between Adversity and Prosocial Attitudes and Behavior Toward Disadvantaged Outgroups.” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 81:3, 307–315, 2011, p. 312.

¹²⁴ Vollhardt, et al., 2011, p. 312.

¹²⁵ H. Fountain, “A Deadly Quake in a Seismic Hot Zone,” *New York Times*, January 26, 2010. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/434260217?accountid=14585>. Accessed on April 23, 2012.

¹²⁶ “Scientists Issue Grim Earthquake Warning for Haiti.” *BBC Monitoring Americas*, January 27, 2012. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/918104432?accountid=14585>. Accessed on April 7, 2012.

members.”¹²⁷ This geographical condition and the realization both of Haiti’s current vulnerability and the potential for the Dominican Republic’s future vulnerability allow for the humanization of Haiti and its people, to see their perspective, and to generate empathy for the Haitians, all of which can engender more positive and prosocial attitudes.

Based on the capacity of empathy, humanization, and perspective-taking to generate more positivity toward an outgroup, my expectations for the progression of the Dominican attitudes as represented in these letters are as follows: The letters will demonstrate more negative attitudes toward Haiti prior to the earthquake. When the earthquake hits, there will be a brief period of time where the disaster humanizes the relationship between the two country’s peoples and the letters will likely express a surge of kindness and positivity and a lessening of resentment and negativity toward Haitians. I expect that the findings will show that after this period of time (six months is the figure I use), attitudes demonstrated in the letters will again become negative, but that the level of negativity will not be as negative as it was prior to the earthquake.

With regard to specific themes, I expect that in the Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period, there will be a decrease in negative attitudes shown by negative perception themes (Peaceful Invasion, Haitianization, Threat to National Identity, and Burden) and an increase in positive attitude shown by the positive perception themes (We Should Help Them and We Should Work Together with Them) toward Haitians than before the earthquake (the Pre-Earthquake Period). Or, in the case of positive perception categories, there will be more evidence of a positive attitude immediately after the earthquake than before it.

¹²⁷ Amy Cuddy, Mindi S. Rock and Michael I. Norton, “Aid in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina: Inferences of Secondary Emotions and Intergroup Helping,” *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 10, 107, 2007, p. 110.

Subsequently, after the initial post-earthquake time period has passed, there will be a rise in negativity during the Post-Earthquake Long Term period, but that this rise in negativity will demonstrate attitudes that are still less negative than the attitudes toward Haitians expressed in the Pre-Earthquake period. Or, for positive perception themes, the appearance of these themes will decrease after the Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period but not to levels as low as in Pre-Earthquake.

CHAPTER 2: DATA AND METHODS

I chose the *Listín Diario* online newspaper as the data source from which to extract my sample for several reasons: it is the highest circulating newspaper in the Dominican Republic; it is firmly established as a news source (as the oldest newspaper in circulation, since 1889); it is available free online in its entirety from 2007 to the present time; and the search terms are manageable by date and section of the newspaper, which makes it an accessible source. Additionally, most letters in the data set are one page long with two or three exceptions, making it more efficient to code and more consistent overall.

In lieu of the existence of a survey that could show the depth of attitudes of Dominicans toward Haitians, content analysis of media representations of public opinion—while not a mirror of public opinion— can provide insight into attitudes that would not otherwise be available to the outside observer. Additionally, media content analysis has the capacity to overcome two difficulties present in survey results; that of the social acceptability factor and that of the accuracy of memory.

To a certain extent, those interviewed in a survey regarding their opinions toward a polemic issue may consciously (lie) or subconsciously edit, adjust, or soften their opinions so as to appear a certain way to the interviewer; to present a position that is more socially acceptable. Also, common sense dictates that those who are asked in a survey to remember what their attitudes were toward something after the fact might not respond as they would have at the time those attitudes were shaped. Not only does the passage of time corrupt one's memory, life experience dictates our understanding of past events and attitudes.

This study attempts to determine the shaping of attitudes by a cataclysmic event during several specific periods of time. Given the scope of my intended data analysis, it is not plausible to expect that in the interim between the formation of an attitude and the taking of a survey, a level of recall useful to a study of attitude change would be maintained. Attitudes would have already been shaped and reshaped by that event to the extent that reflecting upon their progression in the past would be difficult, if not impossible.

Letters to the editor are not a perfect representation of public opinion, but can be a legitimate alternative to surveys when no such surveys are available. Cooper, et al. found with regard to the United States that “letters to the editor neither perfectly represent the voice of the people, nor do they appear to be heavily skewed.” Verba notes that the policy preferences of those who write editorial letters differ little from public opinion, and Sigelman, et al. observes that letters to the editor “can, under certain conditions, provide an accurate gauge of public thinking on controversial issues.”¹²⁸

The media landscape of Latin America and the Caribbean is more difficult to define, surviving through dictatorships, government takeovers, and ownership by the elite few. The Dominican Republic press is mainly free and diverse, though “[a]ttacks and intimidation against the press by both state and private actors are an occasional problem.”¹²⁹ The main concern with using letters to the editor as a reflection of public

¹²⁸ See Christopher Cooper, H. Gibbs Knotts, and Moshe Haspel, “The Content of Political Participation: Letters to the Editor and the People Who Write them,” in *Political Science & Politics*, 42:1, 2009, p. 131; Sidney Verba, Richard A. Brody, Edwin B. Parker, Norman H. Nie, Nelson W. Polsby, Paul Ekman, and Gordon S. Black, “Public Opinion and the War in Vietnam,” in *The American Political Science Review*, 61:2, 317-333, June 1967; and Lee Sigelman, “Letters to the Editor as a Public Opinion Thermometer: The Martin Luther King Holiday Vote in Arizona,” in *Social Science Quarterly*, 73:4, December 1, 1992, p. 938.

¹²⁹ Freedom House, “Freedom of the Press 2011: Dominican Republic.” <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2011/dominican-republic>. Accessed on April 22, 2012.

opinion is that in Latin America and the Caribbean, there is generally a “high proportion of private ownership in the media.”¹³⁰ Letters to the editor will inevitably reflect the ideological leanings of the newspaper’s ownership, which must be taken into consideration. Hughes notes that the one of the major barriers to media opening in Latin America is the “small number of family-owned companies dominating the most important outlets”¹³¹ *Listín Diario* was taken over in 2003 by the Dominican government (which presents its own set of concerns over freedom of the press) in the wake of an enormous bank scandal.¹³² In 2010, the newspaper was bought by a group of Dominican businessmen,¹³³ one of whom is a member of the Vicini family, which controls some of the largest sugar companies in the country, and which sued to stop the release of *The Price of Sugar*, a documentary about the poor level of working conditions for Haitians in the Dominican sugar plantations.¹³⁴

While for journalists, private ownership of a newspaper of the self-interested few might mean “self-censorship as a result of pressure from owners due to their political and economic interests,”¹³⁵ for letters to the editor it may mean that those letters which conform most to the ideological leanings of the editor are those that make it through to

¹³⁰ Rosa Gonzalez, *Media and Democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Paris, France: Unesco Pub., 1996, p. 21.

¹³¹ Sallie Hughes and Chappell Lawson, “The Barriers to Media Opening in Latin America,” *Political Communication*, 22:1, 9-25, 2005, p. 12.

¹³² James Canute, “Dominican Republic Seizes Media Group,” *FT.Com*: 1-1, 2003. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/228698326?accountid=14585>. Accessed on April 20, 2012.

¹³³ Panky Corcino. “Anuncian Venta Del Periódico Listín Diario,” *El Diario La Prensa*, September 1, 2010. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/758869719?accountid=14585>, Accessed on April 20, 2012.

¹³⁴ Barry Paris, “There’s nothing sweet about the price of sugar. *Pittsburgh Post - Gazette*, March 13, 2008, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/390693239?accountid=14585>. Accessed on April 23, 2012.

¹³⁵ Freedom House.

publication. Editors act as gatekeepers in that the editor “selects the letters for publication from a wider set (and therefore discards the rest) and also edits those selected.”¹³⁶

Though it is impossible to know for certain, one can anticipate that a business owner with interests articulated by a desire to limit freedom of the press (with regard to the living and working conditions of Haitians in the Dominican Republic) would have a significant and particular impact on the gatekeeping process of editorials that mention attitudes toward Haiti and Haitians. Editorial letters will likely reflect the opinions of the elite ownership of a news outlet, as well as the opinions of the educated few that have the time, skill, and political wherewithal to write in to an elite newspaper. But this does not mean that such letters cannot be used as a tool of analysis for greater understanding of a societal issue. Hughes and Prado note that “media owners and content influence public opinion (real and perceived), elite and nonelite attitudes, elections, and policy formation.”¹³⁷ Sagás notes that elite opinion is important because its influence filters down into society at large:

“Elites in the Dominican Republic are a small group, but they have had great influence on the creation and reproduction of anti-Haitian attitudes (A.B. Betances 1985; L. Despradel 1974; F.J. Franco 1973). In the Dominican Republic, elites control policy making and the media, thus exerting considerable influence on public opinion. Therefore, beliefs opinions, and ideologies held by Dominican elites permeate popular opinion by way of the media and authoritarian power structures.”¹³⁸

While this is not a two way street, and opinions as reflected in editorial letters cannot be substituted for or understood as popular opinion, media representations of

¹³⁶ S.A. Scauzillo, *Whose View Is It? Gatekeeping Theory and the Selection and Publication of Letters to the Editor*. California State University, Fullerton, 2005. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, p. 108. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/305349374?accountid=14585>

¹³⁷ Sallie Hughes and Paola Prado, “Media Diversity and Social Inequality in Latin America,” in *The Great Gap: Inequality and the Politics of Redistribution in Latin America*, edited by Merike Blofield, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 109-146, 2011 p. 111.

¹³⁸ Sagás, p. 15.

attitudes as demonstrated by editorial letters can offer valuable insight into an issue, and can still be considered a legitimate source of analysis that can provide a greater understanding of the attitudes of a nation.

To create my data set, I downloaded all letters from January 12, 2009 to January 12, 2012, one year before and two years after the massive earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12, 2010, limiting results to letters appearing in the *Editoriales* (Editorials) and *Puntos de vista* (Opinions) sections of the *Listín Diario* website.

To yield results that had the potential to show attitudes toward Haiti and Haitians, I searched for the Spanish word “*haitiano*,” or Haitian.¹³⁹ The reason I have chosen the search term “*haitiano*” is that searching for the term “Haitian” rather than for “Haiti” has the potential to yield more personal results. There are numerous Haitian immigrants living in the Dominican Republic. While the search term “Haiti” would refer only to the country of Haiti and implicitly, to those who live there, the term “*haitiano*” would refer to three groups of people: Haitians living in Haiti, Haitians living in the Dominican Republic, and Dominicans of Haitian descent who were born in the Dominican Republic but are generally still regarded by the Dominican people as Haitian. Coding letters found through this search term would therefore encapsulate attitudes toward Haitians in general, not only toward Haitians living in Haiti. Also, I anticipated that there would be numerous examples of letters that matched the search term “Haiti” that also appeared in the

¹³⁹ Using alternate search terms yields distinct data. For example, searching the term “*haitianización*,” or “Haitianization,” instead yields only twenty-one letters, about half of which are found in the “*haitiano*” data set, but the search term “*terremoto*,” or “earthquake” yields 212 results that intersect about half the time as well.

“Haitian” search, and I did not feel that by narrowing the data set in this way I am inadvertently excluding important data. The data set contains 267 letters.¹⁴⁰

In order to better analyze the data and for greater reader understanding, I divided the sample into three time periods: “Pre-Earthquake,” the year leading up to the earthquake (January 12, 2009 through January 11, 2010); “Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period,” the six months immediately following the earthquake (January 12, 2010 through July 12, 2010); and “Post-Earthquake Long Term,” the year and a half following the honeymoon period, (July 13, 2010 through January 12, 2012).

In establishing the time limits for this “Honeymoon Period,” six months after the earthquake intuitively seemed apt as a period of time during which attitudes of Dominican toward Haitians would most likely not reflect the norm, that attitudes would be temporarily kinder, more forgiving, and more positive. The usefulness of selecting this time period to represent the immediate aftermath was also formed during by my initial open coding of the data set. Three months seemed too short a period of time, and after any longer than six months, I judged that these temporarily elevated positive attitudes would begin to wear off, and former attitudes of frustration, resentment, and general negativity would set in.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ The original total data set acquired as described above contains 270 letters. Three of these letters—one from each Data set—did not apply to my analysis by virtue of the fact that two of them are repeats and one of them was originally published in 2004, making it ineligible as a representation of attitudes during the data set time period. Of these non-applicable letters, one appeared in each Data set. Once I removed those letters, the data set was decreased by three and I ended up with 267. The Pre-Earthquake group contains 91 letters; the Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period group, 82; and the Post-Earthquake Long Term group, 94.

¹⁴¹ When examining these data, it will be important to recognize that the term “Haitian” with regard to these letters will mean both; Haitians residing within Haiti, and ethnic Haitians who have migrated, either recently or in the distant past, to the Dominican Republic. Often these letters do not distinguish between these two or three groups, so for the sake of simplicity, when discussing the results, I will use this term in an overly-simplistic way.

In order to code the letters in this data set, six themes were selected. Each letter would be coded for these themes, which are not exclusive; the letters can be coded with as many themes as are in the letter, except for two themes, Threat to National Identity and Haitianization, which are mutually exclusive and will be addressed below. Not all letters fall into a category. If there are no themes present in a letter, the letter would not be coded for any themes and would therefore be removed from the final set prior analysis. A small sample of letters was reread and recoded to ensure intercoder reliability. The same results were produced by this sample analysis as found in the coding that I performed upon the entire data set.

The concepts selected for coding this data set are as follows:

1. **Peaceful Invasion: Haitians are “peacefully invading” the Dominican Republic.** This expression comes from the Spanish phrase “invasión pacífica.” Invasión pacífica, or peaceful invasion, is a term used to describe Haitian immigration to the Dominican Republic, and it evokes still present bitterness over Haiti’s occupation of the Dominican Republic in the mid-1800s, as well as fears associated with perceptions that Haitians are immigrating to the Dominican Republic and having children in the Dominican Republic in numbers too large for the nation to support. This theme does not include basic references to “massive” immigrations, influxes, etc. of Haitians. While the potential is there for such statements to be either factual or perception-based, the statement must more explicitly point to a peaceful invasion or another similarly-phrased idea that falls within the same category, not merely make mention of large numbers of Haitians entering the Dominican Republic. An example of a letter that would be coded as peaceful invasion is one that refers to: “the phenomenon

of massive Haitian immigration (which is acquiring real signs of a peaceful invasion)” The same example, if it appeared without the qualification it being a peaceful invasion, would *not*, on the basis of simply referencing “massive Haitian immigration,” be coded as Peaceful Invasion.

2. Haitianization: The Dominican Republic is in the process of being “Haitianized” by Haitian immigrants. Often found in the specific use of this word, “Haitianization,” this theme conveys the fear of Haitians destroying Dominican culture by transforming it into Haitian culture. This theme is conveyed in rhetoric that treats the Haitian culture and people as a sort of quicksand into which Dominican culture and identity is absorbed, or as a disease that has the capacity to infect the Dominicans and transform them (undesirably) into Haitians. The implication of this sort of rhetoric is that if the Haitians continue to immigrate to the Dominican Republic (or if too many Dominican interact with Haitians at the border), all Dominicans will eventually become Haitianized, and they will lose what makes them Dominican.

3. Threat to National Identity: Haitians are a threat to the national identity/sovereignty of the Dominican Republic. This theme refers to the perceived negative impact and threat of Haitian immigration and its potential to injure or destroy the national identity of the Dominican Republic. This theme is found in phrases such as “Haitians will destroy our national identity” and includes all words that indicate a detrimental effect to the Dominican Republic’s national identity, sovereignty, or nation that the writer believes is attributable to Haitians.

Readers may at first glance think that these two categories, Haitianization and Threat to National Identity, overlap, but there is a clear distinction between the two that

necessitates using both categories in coding the data. I elucidate the difference between these two themes below.

Haitianization is an umbrella category to that of Threat to National Identity. By this I mean that Haitianization is implicitly a process by which National Identity is destroyed. However, these two themes are coded differently. A threat to the one's national identity is simply that, whereas to Haitianize someone is to not only to threaten their national identity with dissolution but also to *replace* one's identity with something else entirely. Threat to National Identity attacks that which is Dominican. Haitianization destroys that which is Dominican and transforms it in the manner of a culture vampire into something totally distinct. The implication is that Threat to National Identity is destroying that which is good, while Haitianization is stealing away that which is good and subsequently replacing it with that which is bad.

The above distinction means for this coding process that these two themes cannot appear in the same letter. If a letter is coded as Haitianization, then it cannot also be coded as Threat to National Identity because Threat to National Identity is already implied and included within the Haitianization theme. The appearance of themes that could *only* be categorized as Threat to National Identity and *not* as Haitianization necessitated the existence of two separate themes.

If a letter does not include the exact word "Haitianize" or "Haitianization," then this category must be coded on the basis of whether the context contains the theme. For example, one author notes: "Everything points to the fact that Haitians in our country can do what they feel like, without a reaction from our authorities. They can pour Haiti inside here and turn us into another Haiti, crushing our nationality, and probably nothing would

happen.” This letter does not use the exact term “Haitianization” or “Haitianize.” The writer also uses the phrase “crushing our nationality,” which at first glance might direct the reader to think it should be classified as Threat to National Identity. However, it is clear from the context and description—the transformation of the Dominican Republic into “other,” into that which is Haitian and no longer Dominican—that she is talking about Haitianization.

In contrast, an author referring to his fear that “all the successes. . . of our policy, education, or health, will be diluted by the tidal wave of people who want to cross the border to destroy with their feet what has cost the Dominican Republic so much to make with our hands.” If the author had written of diluting culture, or “*Dominicanidad*,” then this letter would have been coded as Haitianization. But because he is only writing about destroying what the Dominican Republic built—a nation—and not about the nation being turned into something Haitian—it is coded as a Threat to National Identity. This excerpt is also a good example of a burden that is coded as such without the actual appearance of the word “burden.” It is coded as a burden because here, the word dilution refers to the fact that advances of progress are being rolled back due to the strain on education and healthcare.

To give an example of a letter that would not be coded as Threat to National Identity, one author notes that “it should be clear that the permeability of our border will not permit us to keep out the “youth tsunami” (Paúl Collier) of almost a million young Haitians who will enter the labor market in the next 5 years.” While one could look at this excerpt and the greater context of the letter and see that perhaps the author is concerned about the impact of Haitian immigration on the Dominican Republic’s national identity,

the example is not concrete enough to code it as such because the author never addresses this concern in the letter or in this segment, either by using the phrase national identity or by expressing a similar sentiment.

4. Burden: Haitians (and Haiti) are a burden to the Dominican Republic.

This theme discusses Haitians as a burden to the Dominican Republic, found in phrases that discuss Haitian immigrants to the Dominican Republic not just as a burden but also as a weight, a hindrance, etc., anything that pertains to the theme at hand. The Burden category refers to threats to the safety of Dominicans or the health of the Dominican economy, so crime or threats to the success of the economy fall under this category. As with the Peaceful Invasion theme, I will not count massive influx or immigration of Haitians as a burden. While the use of the word large or massive is a matter of perspective rather than an objective fact, a large incoming population of Haitians does not necessarily imply a burden, whether or not it is the intention of the author to imply that. A large influx of immigrants could in fact be a good thing, as with all migration networks between nearby countries, there are arguments to be made from both sides. To be coded as a burden, the author of the letter has to use words similar to burden, such as weight, or imply a burden. One author notes: “it would be a great relief for the Dominicans if there were some sort of institutions in that country, a little more effective than the “let what will happen happen and let them do what they will” of their current president.” It is also worth noting that both the themes Haitianization and Threat to National Identity also imply a burden, and would be categorized as such if they did not also possess the attributes requiring that they be coded as more than just a burden.

5. We Should Help Them: The Dominican Republic should/wants to help Haiti. This theme does not include references to having helped Haiti in the past, but rather a commitment to future assistance. For example, one writer notes that Haiti “knows that his brother to the East is at his side and he also knows that his brother has always been there to help him by providing shelter and sharing his bread.” Though the sentiment of helping another human being is evident in this passage, it does not demonstrate a desire to help in the future, so it would not be coded as belonging to this theme. The reason for which this theme does not include references to past help is because having helped Haiti in the past implies that you neither the belief that one thinks they should help in the future or that they intend to. For the purpose of coding this theme, it is not enough to say we (as Dominicans) have had solidarity with Haiti, it must say something to the effect of we should have solidarity with Haiti, or that the best thing would be to help them, such as the following example: “It is time that the Dominicans grant priority to the Haitian’s case in all its aspects.” Here, an indication of desire to help Haiti and Haitians in the future is demonstrated, and so this letter would be coded with this theme.

6. We Should Work Together with Them: The Dominican Republic should/wants to work together with Haiti. This theme adheres to the same rules as above; it has to reference the future, not the past. Otherwise, it is fairly self-explanatory. The phrase “work together” is not explicitly required; rather it should say something similar that implies the same concept. For example, “That is a valid reason . . . to never rule out the possibility to act and influence, together with the Haitian

people, in the search for alternatives and solutions to these countless and difficult problems. . . .”

Among my themes, four can be considered negatively oriented, i.e. expressing a negative perception of Haitians: Peaceful Invasion, Haitianization, Threat to National Identity, and Burden. Two of the themes are positively oriented: We Should Help Them and We Should Work Together with Them.

My expectations are that immediately after the earthquake on January 12 2010, during the Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period, there will be a decrease in negative attitudes toward Haitians shown by negative perception themes and an increase in positive attitudes shown by the positive perception themes.

Subsequently, after the initial post-earthquake time period has passed, in the Post-Earthquake Long Term period, there will be a rise in negative attitudes and a decrease in positive attitudes, but these shifts in attitude will not return to the levels of the Pre-Earthquake period.

So, based on these expectations, my hypotheses are:

H₁: Negative attitudes towards Haitians will decrease in the six months immediately after the earthquake, and positive attitudes will increase.

H₂: Negative attitudes toward Haitians will increase long term after the earthquake, and positive attitudes will decrease, but attitudes will still remain less negative overall than found in prior to the earthquake.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

When the coding process was complete, a total of 177 letters had been coded as not being applicable to any of the themes and a total of ninety letters were coded as relevant to at least one theme.¹⁴²

Hypothesis 1 states that Dominicans attitudes toward Haitians will improve in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake and get worse again in the long term, and Hypothesis 2 states that these attitudes will remain, in general and in the long run, more positive than attitudes prior to the earthquake had been.

Of the six themes, four of them negative—Peaceful Invasion, Haitianization, Threat to National Identity, and Burden—and two of them positive, We Should Help Them and We Should Work Together, my expectations of the results were met with regard to H_1 except for the Burden theme. All negative themes except for Burden decreased in the Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period. Most of the negative themes dropped dramatically after the earthquake. The only theme that did not drop dramatically was Burden. Because Burden actually becomes more frequent immediately after the earthquake despite a drop in the actual number of appearances (and also because the Post-Earthquake Honeymoon period is half as small as the Pre-Earthquake period), this theme does not support H_1 .

¹⁴² When analyzing these data, it is important to recognize that the three data sets are not equal periods of time. The Pre-Earthquake time period is one year, the Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period is six months, and the Post-Earthquake Long Term is a year and a half. This is worth noting because, with many of the themes that denote a negative perception of or reaction toward the Haitian population, the decreased appearance of the themes in the Post-Earthquake Long Term period is all the more impactful for representing a larger period of time. I reiterate this idea, below, when introducing the charts, which are presented for the clearer understanding of the reader, despite the distinct time periods.

With regard to the positive themes, We Should Help Them, which only appeared once in the Pre-Earthquake period, experienced a spike in appearances in the Post-Earthquake Honeymoon period, supporting H_1 . We Should Work Together, by virtue of demonstrating the same amount of appearances in in each time period, appears at first glance not to support H_1 . However, because Post-Earthquake Honeymoon is a 50% smaller period of time than Pre-Earthquake, the relative frequency of appearances after the earthquake is higher than before, making H_1 true.

The negative themes all support H_2 ; Peaceful Invasion, Haitianization, Threat to National Identity, and Burden all demonstrate less of an appearance in the Post-Earthquake Long Term Period than in the Pre-Earthquake Period.

In terms of the positive themes, We Should Help Them also supports H_2 ; there is a higher occurrence of this theme in the Post-Earthquake Long Term period than in Pre-Earthquake. As with before, the theme of We Should Work Together should be looked at via the relative appearance of themes within time sets; there is an equal appearance of the theme in the Pre-Earthquake period and in Post-Earthquake Long Term, yet, because Post-Earthquake Long Term is a year and a half long versus a year, this actual means that relative to the Pre-Earthquake period, the theme is less apparent after the earthquake long term. Therefore, H_2 is not true for We Should Work Together.

In summary, all themes demonstrate less negative attitudes and more positive attitudes evident immediately after the earthquake except for the Burden theme, making H_1 is almost universally supported. Therefore, Peaceful Invasion, Haitianization, Threat to National Identity, We Should Help Them, and We Should Work Together all support H_1 . All themes except for Work Together support the notion that attitudes remain in the

long term more positive than prior to the earthquake. So, all themes support both hypotheses with two exceptions: Burden does not support H_1 but supports H_2 , and We Should Work Together supports H_1 but does not support H_2 .

Table 1, below, shows a breakdown of how often the six themes—Peaceful Invasion, Haitianization, Threat to National Identity, Burden We Should Help Them and We Should Work Together—appear throughout this data set as broken down by time period.

The following figures will illustrate for all six themes the progression of these themes across time so that the reader can see the frequency of each theme's appearance and the time periods in which each theme shows the most volume of appearances and vice versa. There are is also a bar chart for each theme that shows the breakdown of the theme by time period as a percentage of the total appearance of the theme in the data set. These charts will correspond to Table 1, below, and are not weighted by time period, so the different lengths of the Pre-Earthquake (one year), Post-Earthquake Honeymoon period (six months), and Post-Earthquake Long Term must be taken into consideration when reviewing these charts.

Table 1: Distribution of Attitudes Before and After the Earthquake

Time Frame	Peaceful Invasion	Haitianization	National Identity	Burden	Help	Work Together
Pre-Earthquake 1/12/09-1/11/10	79%	74%	73%	44%	6%	33%
Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period 1/12/10-7/12/10	5%	5%	9%	33%	71%	33%
Post-Earthquake Long Term 7/13/10-1/12/12	16%	21%	18%	22%	24%	33%

Figure 1: Peaceful Invasion – Progression of Theme Appearance

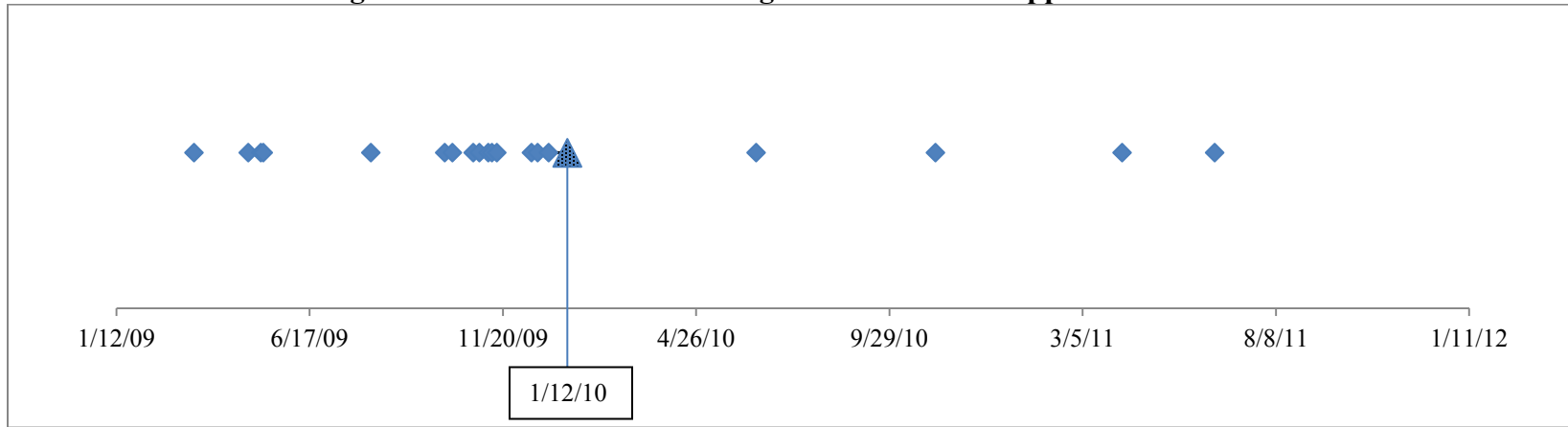


Figure 1a: Peaceful Invasion – Appearance of Theme by Time Period

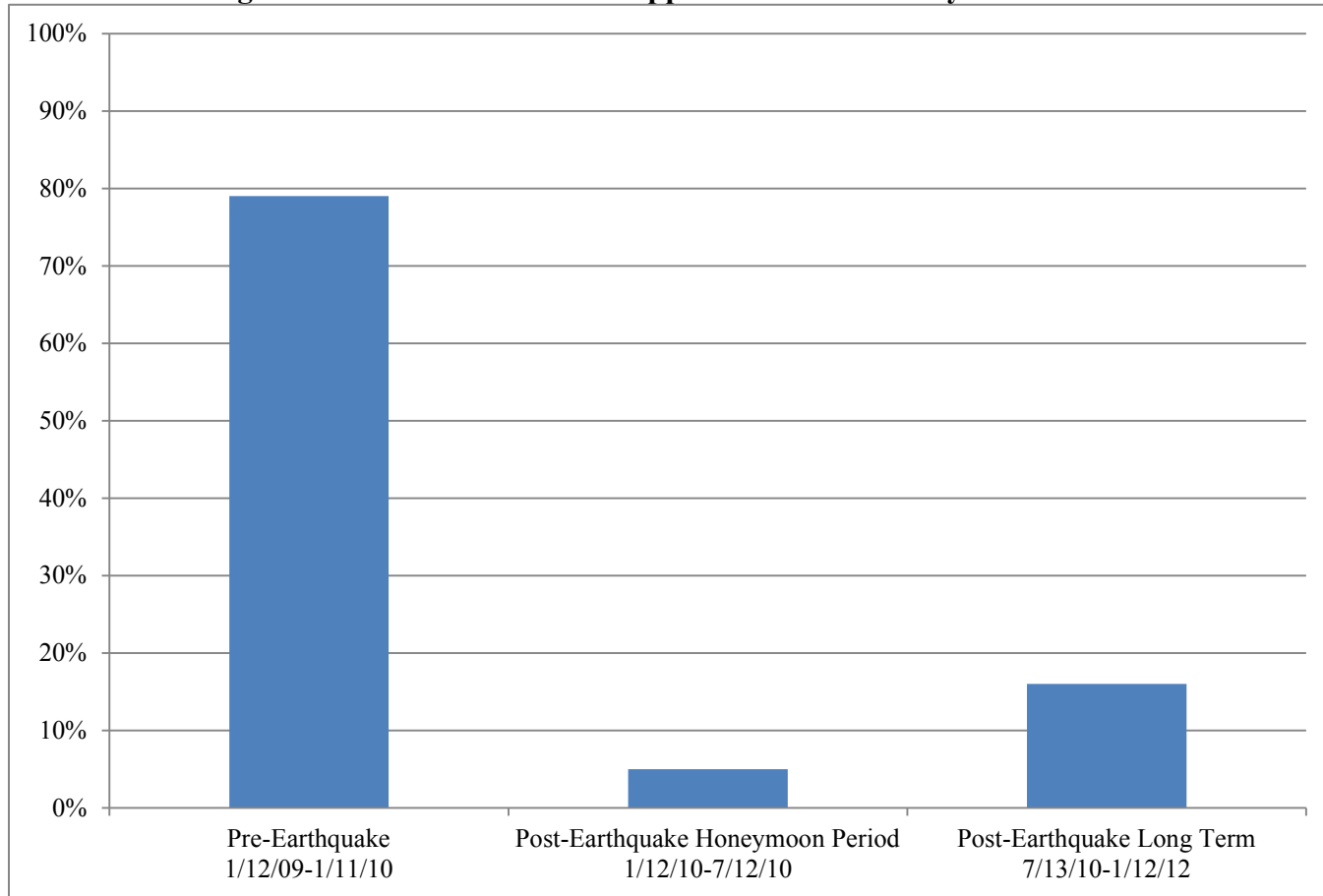


Figure 2: Haitianization – Progression of Theme Appearance

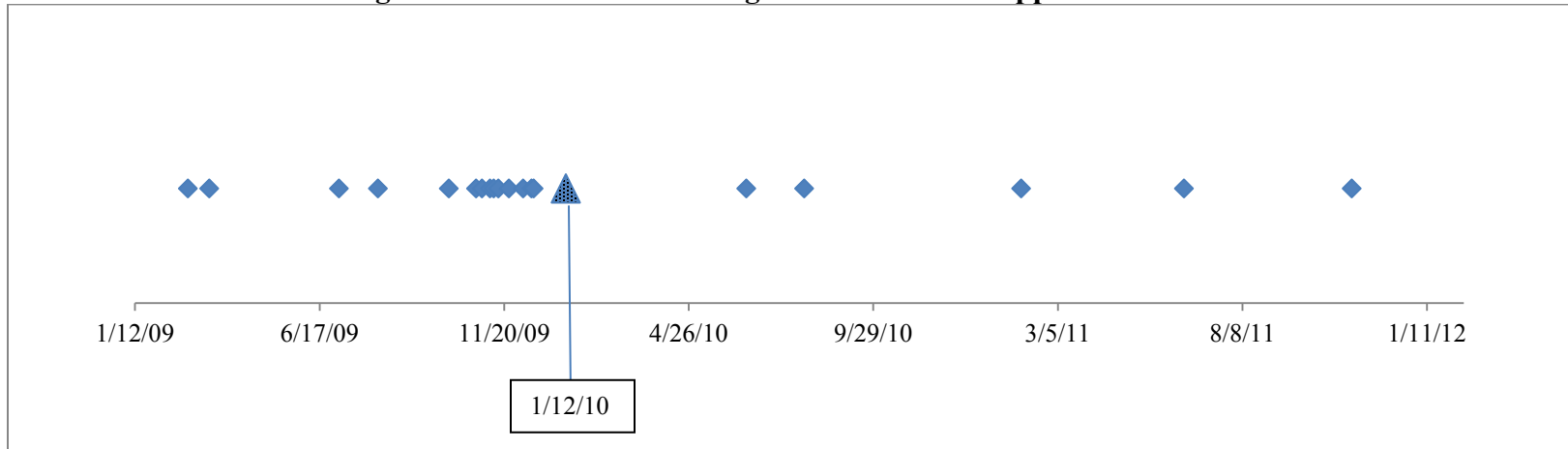


Figure 2a: Haitianization – Appearance of Theme by Time Period

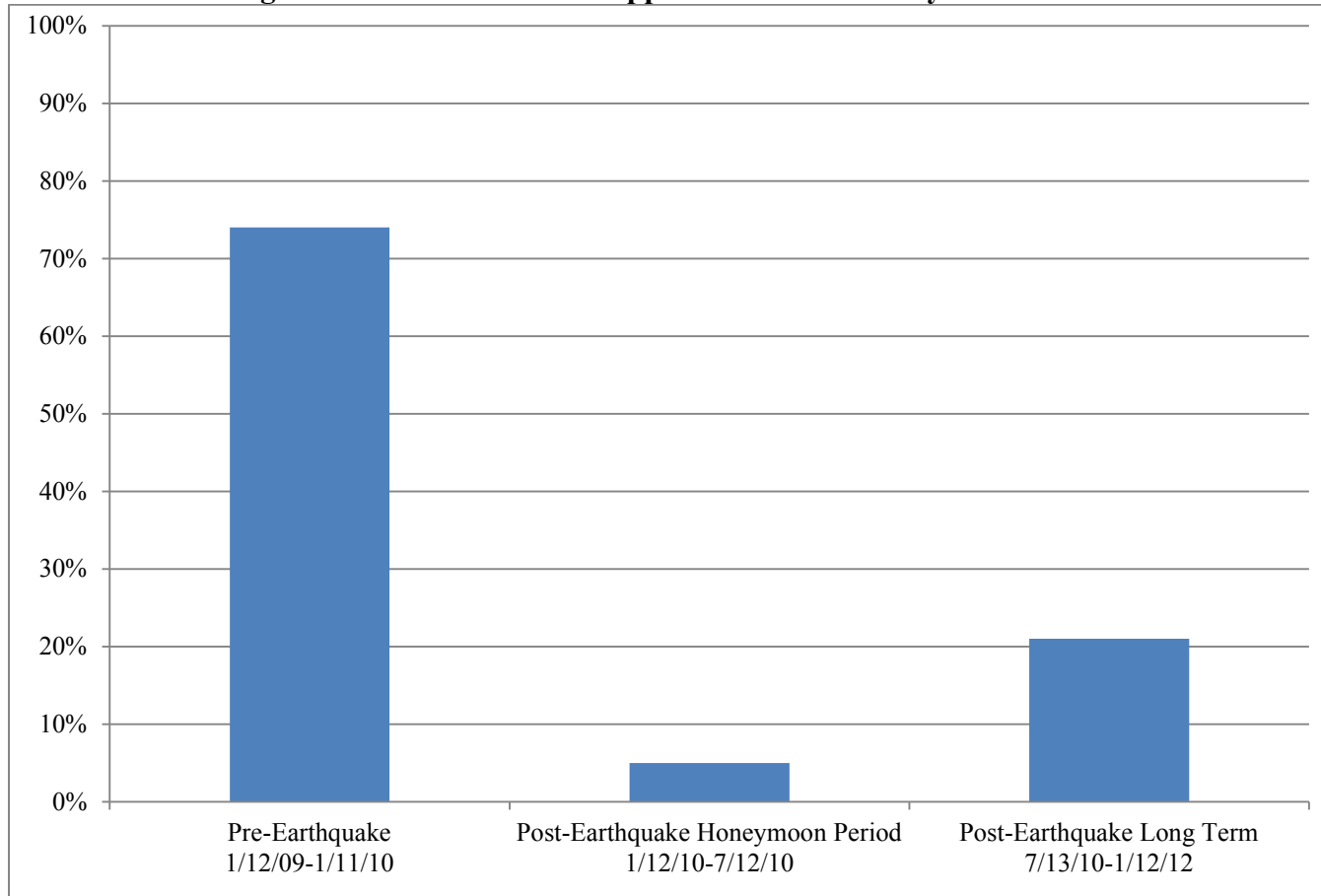


Figure 3: Threat to National Identity

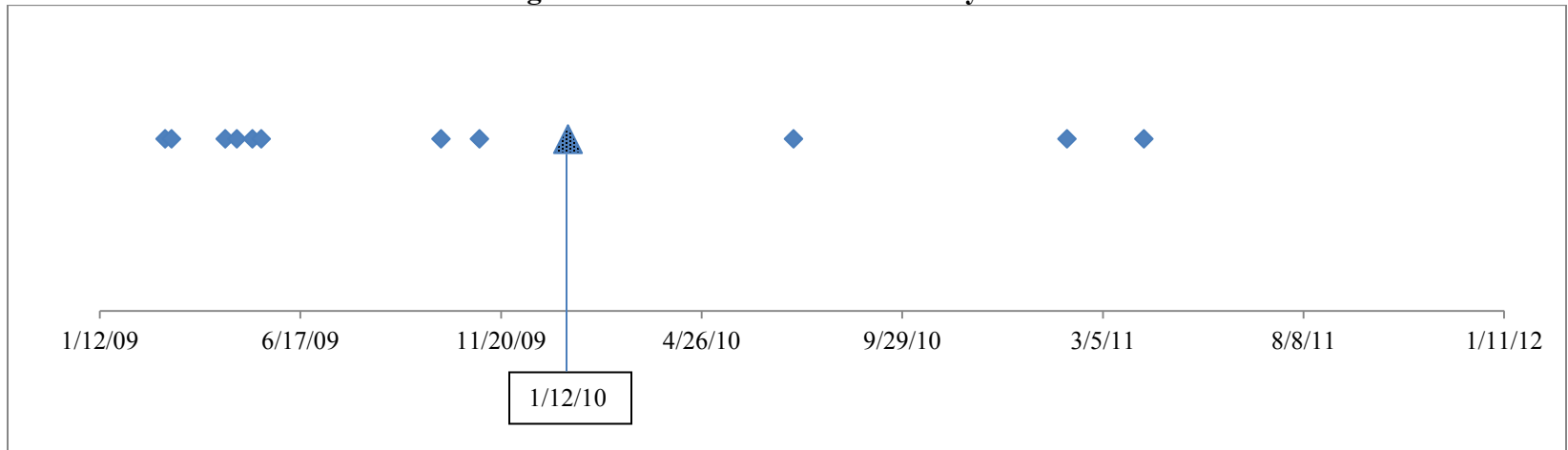


Figure 3a: Threat to National Identity – Appearance of Theme by Time Period

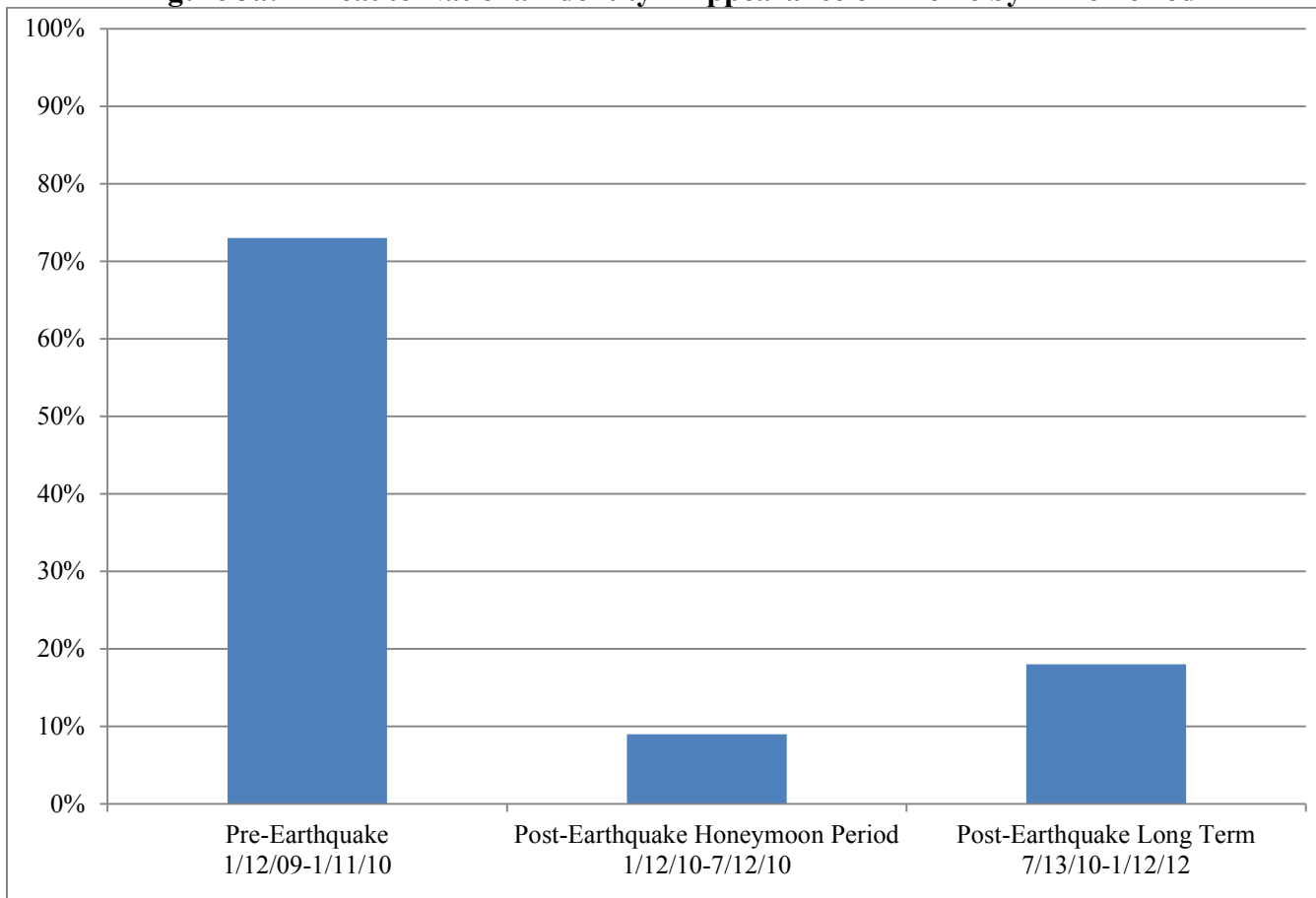


Figure 4: Burden

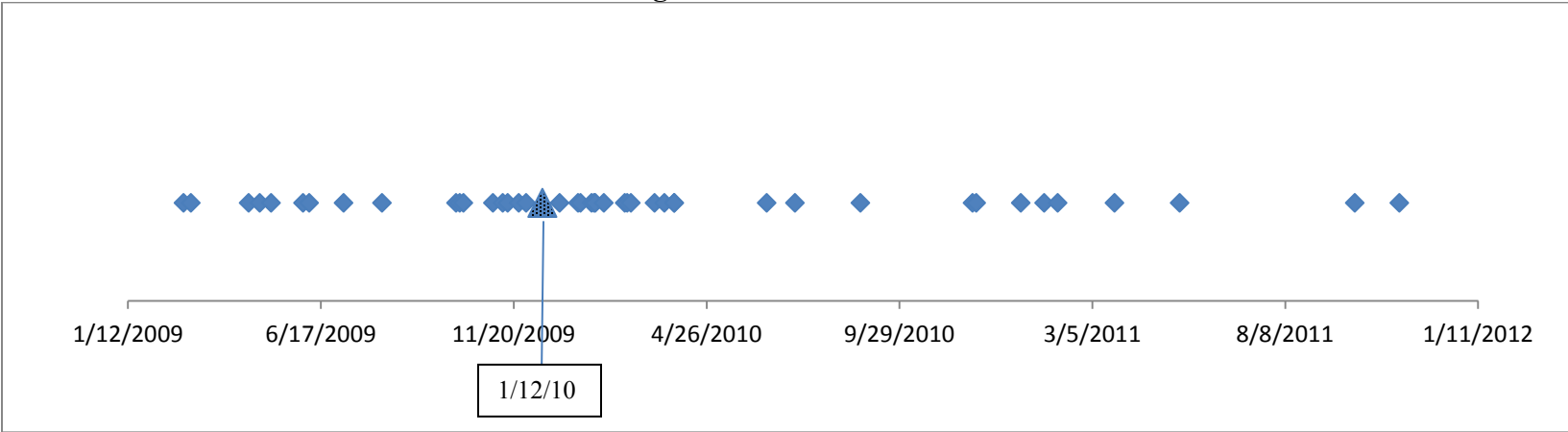


Figure 4a: Burden – Appearance of Theme by Time Period

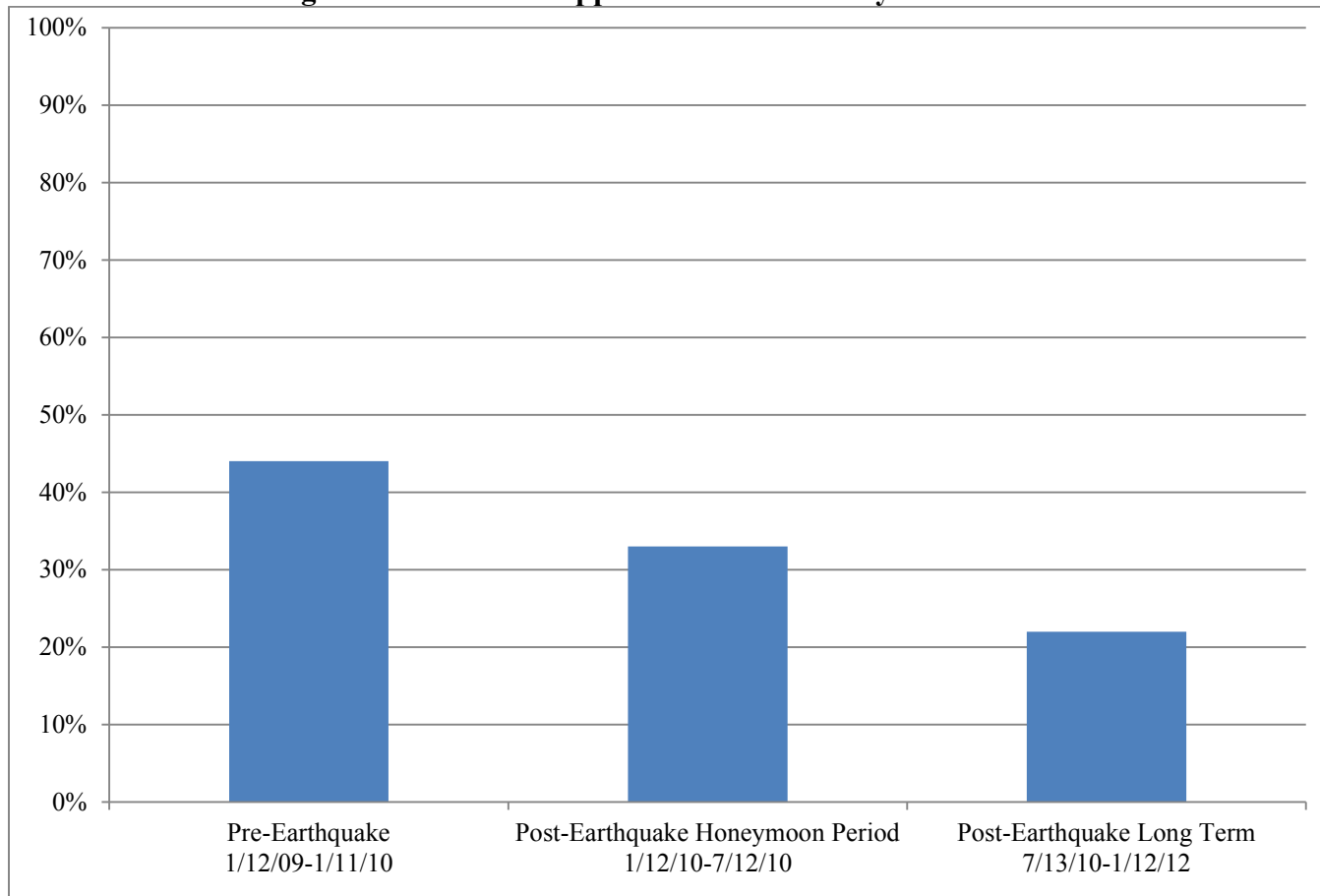


Figure 5: We Should Help Them

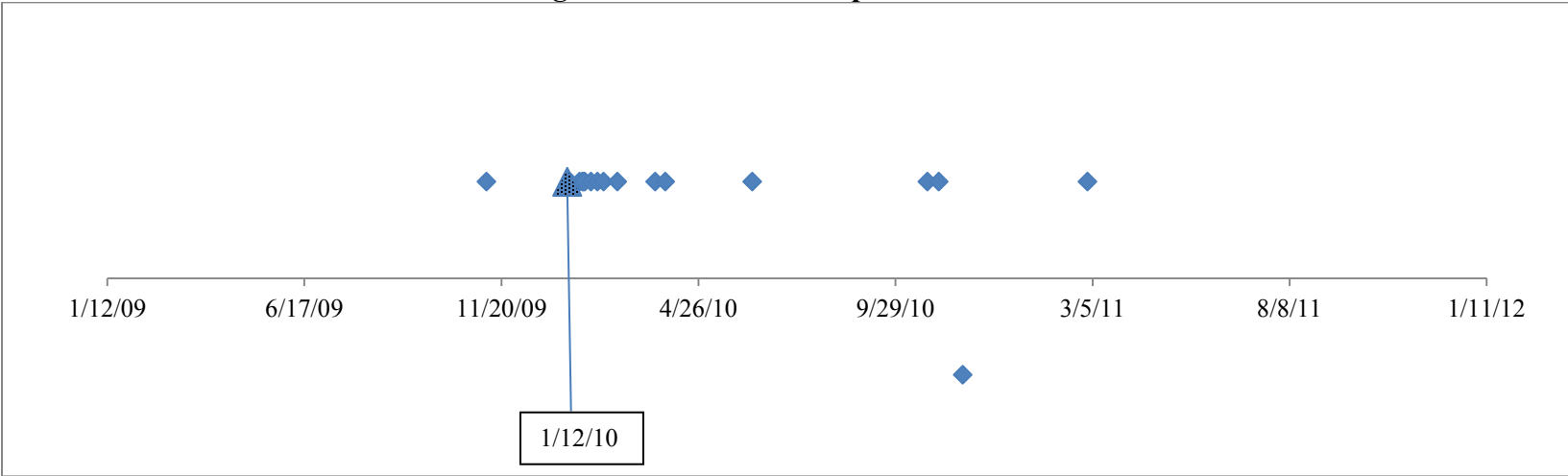


Figure 5a: We Should Help Them – Appearance of Theme by Time Period

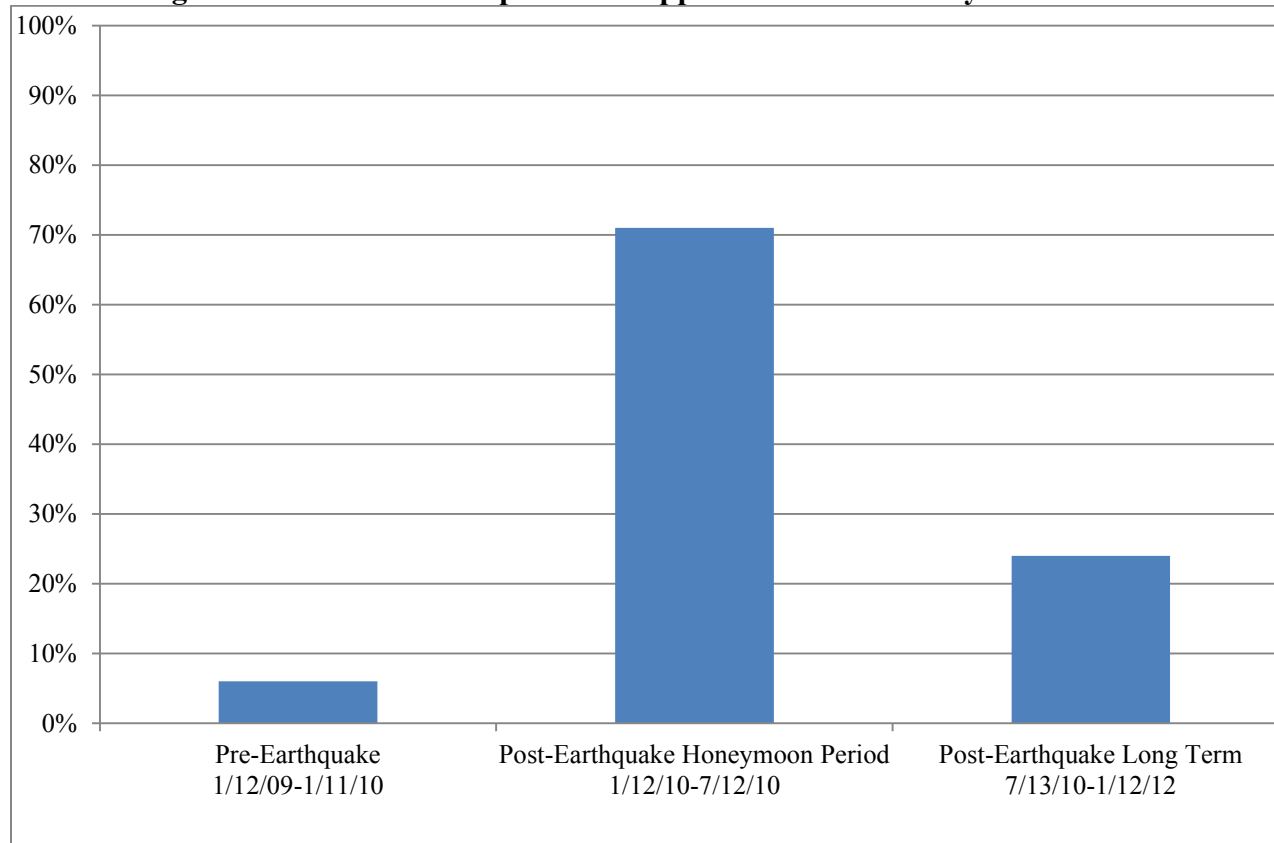


Figure 6: We Should Work Together

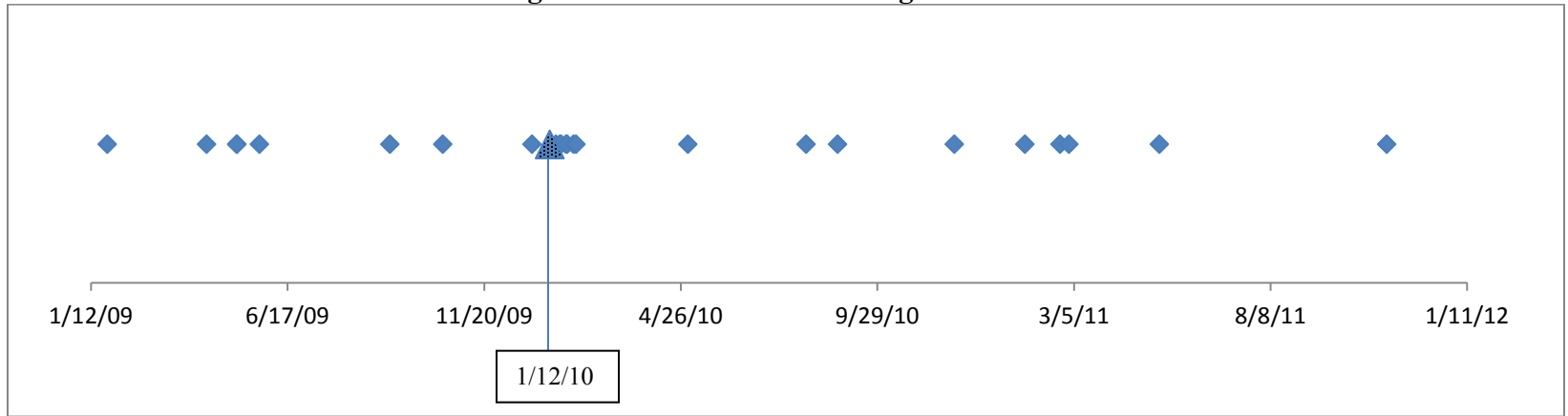
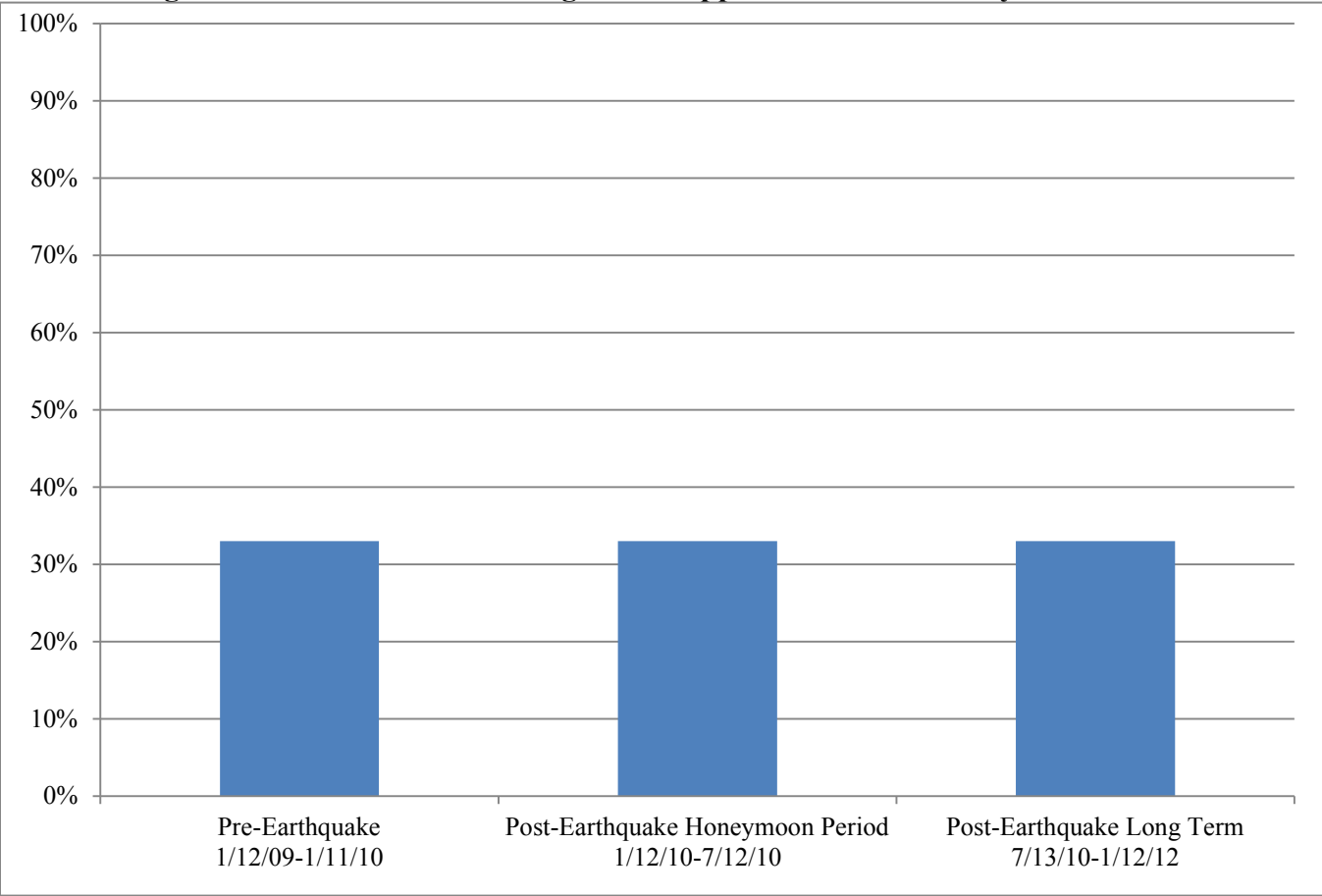


Figure 6a: We Should Work Together – Appearance of Theme by Time Period



The first three themes, Peaceful Invasion, Haitianization, and Threat to National Identity, are all strongly correlated with one another, and so I will address them at the same time to avoid redundancy. These themes cover all the negative perception themes, without the exception of Burden: Peaceful Invasion, Haitianization, and Threat to National Identity all support my hypotheses, and confirm my expectations expressed in my first hypothesis, that there will be much less of a negative attitude toward Haitians immediately after the earthquake than prior to the earthquake. These themes also support the second hypothesis, that there will be a rise in negativity in the Post-Earthquake Long Term Period, but negative attitudes will still remain lower than found in the Pre-Earthquake period.

[VIEW FIGURES 1–3a HERE]

There are nineteen total appearances of the Peaceful Invasion in the *Listín Diario* letters, the first being on March 16, 2009 and the last on June 20, 2011. As shown by Figure 1, The appearance of this theme peaks in November of 2009, and with almost as many references in December as in November, and with no appearances in the eleven days of January 2010 that are prior to the earthquake.

The bar chart in Figure 1a shows the breakdown of the Peaceful Invasion theme by time frame. There are fifteen appearances of the peaceful invasion theme in Pre-Earthquake, one appearance in the Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period, and three appearances in the Post-Earthquake Long Term period. Peaceful Invasion appears with great frequency prior to the earthquake at intervals of about a month, a few weeks or even days, with the two exceptions being between May of 2009 and August and then between

August and October of 2009, whereas there is no activity after the earthquake for five months.

After that five month period of time during the Honeymoon Period, during which there is very little activity, there are three more appearances of the theme within the data set, but they occur at much wider intervals than previously; in June of 2010, then November of 2010, and April of 2011. After this, there are no additional results prior to the end of the data sample on January 12, 2012, which means that the gaps in appearance are every five months; five months; 2 months, and at least nine months, respectively.

The appearance of the Haitianization theme is evident nineteen times in the total data set, as is true of Peaceful Invasion. The first example is on February 26, 2009 and the last appears on November 9, 2011. Again as with Peaceful Invasion, it can be seen in the overall sample that there are many more results in the Pre-Earthquake period, peaking with a cluster in November of that year, as shown in Figure 2. The first few examples appear at intervals of one or two months with the exception of a space between March and July of 2009. In October, the appearances become more frequent, and remain so throughout December of 2009. Again, there is a five month space between the last appearance in 2009 and the next appearance in 2010, after the earthquake, and later appearance are spaced several months apart.

By breaking the data for Haitianization down into separate sets in Figure 2a, we are able to see that there are fourteen appearances in Pre-Earthquake A, only one appearance of the theme in Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period, as with Peaceful Invasion, and four appearances in Post-Earthquake Long Term.

The Threat to National Identity theme has a total of eleven appearances in the total data set. The first appearance is on March 4, 2009, the last on April 6, 2011. In contrast to Peaceful Invasion and Haitianization, the National Identity theme shows the highest frequency of the theme earlier on in 2009 (Figure 3), with bi-monthly appearances in March, April, and May of 2009, followed by a gap of a little under four months between May and the next appearance in October of that year. There is one more appearance before the earthquake, in early November. After the earthquake, there is not an appearance of the theme until July of 2010, six months after the earthquake. The next appearance after that shows up seven months later, and the next after that, two months later.

When broken down by time period (Figure 3a), Pre-Earthquake shows eight appearances of the theme; Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period, one appearance; and Post-Earthquake Long Term, two appearances. As Figure 3a shows, there is quite a dramatic drop in appearance of the theme between Pre-Earthquake and Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period, as is also true of the two prior themes.

Threat to National Identity exhibits an interesting sub-theme; there are a few occurrences that instead of referring simply to threats against the sovereignty of the Dominican Republic, they actually convey the fear of Dominican national territory being coveted by the Haitians. A good example of this theme appears in early 2009, about a year before the earthquake: “[t]he general knowledge is that our neighbor maintains the belief that this land belongs to them.” This perceived threat is elaborated in the idea that if Haitians are permitted to continue entering the Dominican Republic at the same rate at

which they currently immigrate, they will actually attempt to take over Dominican land in a manner that is reminiscent of the 1822 Haitian invasion of the Dominican Republic.

The most concern on the part of the Dominicans regarding all three of these perceived Haitian threats to the Dominican Republic is seen before the earthquake: Peaceful Invasion has fifteen appearances, Haitianization has fourteen, and Threat to National Identity has eight. The cluster of appearances around the late 2009 for all three themes during this time period represents the highest density of appearances for these themes in all three time periods. Even though Threat to National Identity only has eight occurrences in Pre-Earthquake, this is a great deal more, comparatively speaking, than this theme's occurrences in Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period and Post-Earthquake Long Term.

This appearance of a cluster in late 2009 for these themes makes sense because of the passage of the new Dominican constitution that changed, among other things, citizenship rules for ethnic Haitians in the Dominican Republic; this change might have stirred up anti-Haitian sentiment during the period of time in which it was being considered for passage. However, this suggestion is speculative. Also, the actual implementation of the constitution took place right after the earthquake, on January 26, 2010,¹⁴³ and there were far fewer appearances of the theme after the earthquake.

Regardless, this general decrease over time in the negative themes demonstrates that attitudes representing the threat of a Peaceful Invasion, Haitianization, and Threat to National Identity almost disappeared during the Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period, which follows my expectation that Dominican attitudes would become more positive

¹⁴³ Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights, "Introduction" from "Memo: Constitutional Changes in the Dominican Republic, <http://www.rfkcenter.org/node/471>. Accessed on November 23, 2011.

toward Haitians immediately following the earthquake. Also as expected, all three themes occurred more frequently in Post-Earthquake Long Term than in Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period, but less so in the long term than in Pre-Earthquake, which also coincides with the expectations of my second hypothesis. Therefore, for these three themes, both H_1 and H_2 are supported. Each theme appears significantly less frequently in Post-Earthquake Long Term than in Pre-Earthquake and though the other two themes in this group appear through November of 2011 (which can be considered throughout the data set because people are much less likely to write in during the holidays), the Peaceful Invasion stops appearing in June of 2011, which could be an indication of the capacity for some sort of permanency to attitude changes toward Haitians after the earthquake.

Either the lessening of the appearance of these themes represents a shifting attitude on the part of the Dominican Republic, or perhaps with the passage of time and with the intensity of the devastation that occurred in Haiti, the general feeling was that it might have been inappropriate and socially unacceptable about to talk about negative perceptions of Haiti. However, were it to be true that attitudes did not in fact change toward Haitians—but rather that these themes lessened for this reason, out of fear of appearing heartless or cruel to one's peers—it is still noteworthy that two years after the earthquake happened, this attitude change was ongoing. Presumably, after a period of two years, fears of appearing unkind would have worn off and people would have begun to speak more directly again. Because this does not happen, it appears that attitudes as represented by these themes may have shifted in a less negative direction.

The Haitianization and the Peaceful Invasion themes, in addition to peaking during similar periods of time, also appear often on the same dates, in the same letters.

They both appear most frequently toward the end of 2009, only a few months prior to the earthquake. In contrast, it must also be noted that the National Identity theme, unlike Haitianization and Pacific Invasion, does not appear to peak toward the end of the year but rather in March, April, and May 2009. The obvious conclusion that can be drawn from the similarly timed appearance of the themes is that letter writers who talk about the Haitianization theme are often likely to talk about the Peaceful invasion theme, and vice versa; that these two themes complement each other as part of a larger anti-Haitian rhetoric. Perhaps the mention of these themes in tandem with one another can also be attributed to a philosophy inherited from (among other intellectual elites of his time) three-time Dominican president and advisor to Trujillo, Joaquín Balaguer, who was concerned about the “racial, cultural and moral peril from a [sic] the passive invasion by darker-skinned Haitians, who will destroy the roots of *hispanidad*.”¹⁴⁴

In contrast, Threat to National Identity and Peaceful Invasion also appear in conjunction with one another, but at only half the rate that Haitianization appears in the same letters as Peaceful Invasion.

There is somewhat of a body snatcher narrative that can be seen in the simultaneous appearances of Peaceful Invasion and Haitianization. The central concept behind Haitianization is that Haitians are literally absorbing the Dominicans into them, that they are taking over what is Dominican about Dominicans, so much so that the Dominican Republic is in danger of *becoming* Haiti: “The reality is that we are in the presence of the transplant of a population from one State to another State.” Along similar lines is the threat of being “swallowed” by Haiti. A letter coded as Peaceful Invasion that

¹⁴⁴ Howard, 2001, p. 160.

does not use the exact phrase “peaceful invasion” (most letters do) notes that “the Dominican Republic has been the victim of a dangerous ambush” from the “Haitian citizens who can be found illegally in our country.”

The Haitianization rhetoric of transformation and loss of self—viewed in conjunction with the sinister, unseen, and unwanted occupation of the body politic represented by the Peaceful Invasion theme—communicates the idea that not just the state, but also the Dominican body, is being taken possession of.

[VIEW FIGURES 4 and 4a HERE]

An omnipresent theme in this data set is that of Burden, shown in Figure 4. Burden is the only negative theme that does not support both hypotheses. This theme shows a high concentration of appearances throughout the data set, more appearances, in fact, than any other theme, negative or positive. There are a total of forty-five appearances of Burden in the data set, with the first theme appearing on February 26, 2009 and the last on October 4, 2011.

As with other themes, there is a high frequency of appearances of Burden toward the end of 2009. However, unlike the other themes, there are more appearances in the earlier parts of the year leading up to the cluster in November, and the higher frequency starts earlier, in October. Also unlike the other themes, the appearance of the Burden theme continues to be present frequently both immediately after the earthquake and through the two-year anniversary of the earthquake, though less so in the long term. In fact, the frequency of the appearance of this theme is slightly more saturated directly after the earthquake than it is prior to the earthquake even though Figure 4a shows a drop in overall appearances for the Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period.

It can be seen from these different charts how frequently the theme appears surrounding the earthquake, i.e. both before and after, how the appearance of the theme begins to thin out as the months pass after the earthquake. There is a large the gap in April and May of 2010 during the Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period, and then the theme begins to reappear in Post-Earthquake Long Term, but with less intensity than in Pre-Earthquake or Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period.

Counter to my expectations, the Burden theme does not decrease in the Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period, but maintains its frequency of occurrence. In fact, this theme appears more frequency immediately *after* the earthquake. Therefore, my first hypothesis, H_1 , that the Honeymoon Period will demonstrate a more positive attitude toward Haiti than Set A, is not true for this theme. Though it may appear to decrease based on the bar chart in Figure 4a, this figure is based on a percentage of the total appearances of the theme, and the Honeymoon Period is only six months long, meaning that relative to the amount of time, the theme is actually more present Post-Earthquake. However, this theme does appear less frequently in Post-Earthquake Long Term, so H_2 is true, attitudes exhibited in the long term are more positive than attitudes in Pre-Earthquake.

The appearance of the Burden theme immediately following the earthquake will become even more striking when compared to positive themes that also appear immediately after the earthquake, such as We Should Help Them and We Should Work Together with Them.

In and of itself the Burden theme is significant because while the earthquake seemed to change attitudes for the better for the three negative themes discussed above, it

could not change attitudes for the better with regard to Burden. Though this does contradict my first hypothesis, it also makes sense that there should be an increase in a sense of burden after the earthquake takes place because the earthquake itself created an additional burden for the Dominican Republic, on one hand due to the inevitable influx of new immigrants coming from Haiti, and on the other, from the obligation of the Dominican Republic to help its sister country overcome the crisis.

Burden, unlike the other negative themes, is somehow more tangible and realistic, and less of what can sometimes come across as hate speech without much to back it up, as is certainly the case with Peaceful Invasion and Haitianization, terms that implicitly carry with them an inflammatory threat to culture and identity rather than a grounded expression of concern for the negative impact of Haitians on the economy of the Dominican Republic or the lifestyle or well-being of Dominicans. The Burden theme also calls to mind the narrative of different groups living together on the same island and competing for survival. The Dominican Republic, in assisting with the aftereffects of the disaster, is “resolving its drama [that of Haiti] at the cost of our territory and our meager resources.” This statement echoes one of the main arguments explaining ingroup-outgroups relationships, that meager resources are one of the major reasons for which one group might marginalize another.

Within the Burden theme, another theme emerges that casts Haiti and Haitians in the role of the weight that sinks the ship. This rhetoric emphasizes the notion that Haiti is going down and if it goes down, it will take the Dominican Republic with it. One author refers to Haitian children and women begging at stoplights in the Dominican Republic, “giving a pitiful appearance, sometimes making the tourists feel uncomfortable.” The

implication here is that the Haitians are bringing with them their poverty and running off the tourists, and that they have the capacity to destroy the one thing that keeps the Dominican economy afloat; the tourist industry.

Another letter refers “Not addressing the enormous challenges that represent the current status and the future of that country [Haiti], could present a total crisis for them, propelled by economic, political, and social chaos that will transfer itself to our country.” The fear expressed here is that a crisis for Haiti is a crisis for both countries, and therefore must be addressed to avoid Haiti bringing the Dominican Republic down with them. This same letter was coded for Work Together, demonstrating that Dominican attitudes towards Haiti cannot be oversimplified, and also highlighting the positive attitude that the Dominican Republic recognizes the necessity of working together with Haiti for the ultimate survival of both countries.

[VIEW FIGURES 5 and 5a HERE]

The last two themes are positive ones; We Should Help them and We Should Work Together with Them. All theme appearances of We Should Help Them are centered immediately after and in just over a year after the earthquake. As noted, there is only one appearance of this theme prior to the earthquake, on November 9, 2009. The last appearance of this theme in the data set is found on March 1, 2011. The highest concentration of appearances of this theme occurs in the two and a half months immediately following the earthquake, in January and February of 2010. This can be seen both in the scatter chart, which evidences a cluster during that time period (Figure 5) and in bar chart, which shows the enormous increase in appearances from Pre-Earthquake to Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period.

After the end of March 2010, there is a gap of a little more than two months during which the Help theme does not appear, an appearance in June of that year, and another gap of about four months until the next appearance in October of 2010. There are two appearances in reasonably quick succession in October and November, but then another gap and no further appearances of this theme until the last one, making it hard to determine whether these two appearances are part of a larger pattern or rather if they are outliers.

We Should Help Them is in keeping with the first hypotheses. H_1 is supported by this theme, with an increase in the appearance of this theme and therefore of positive attitudes towards Haitians in the Honeymoon Period right after the earthquake. H_2 is supported in that the positive attitudes remain higher as time goes on in Post-Earthquake Long Term than in Pre-Earthquake. However, the Help theme is distinct in that there is only one appearance of it prior to the earthquake. I find this significant. Directly after the earthquake, the frequent appearances of the theme seem to demonstrate an attitude of concern and willingness to assist Haiti, and the fact that despite a lessening of the theme's appearance after the initial few months after the earthquake, it still continues to be present in the letters, if only through March of 2011, whereas it was virtually nonexistent prior to the earthquake. The last theme, appearing a year and a few months after the earthquake does seem to indicate a waning of concern, as well as a desire for Haiti to begin to stand on its own two feet. Still, it demonstrates the capacity on the part of the Dominican Republic for a change in attitude toward Haiti.

The positive themes that appear throughout this data set are often tempered by feelings on the part of the Dominican Republic of resentment, tension, or begrudging

willingness to help. There is a tension throughout these letters between those representing an attitude of desiring to help Haiti and feeling that to do so would be a burden that could possibly compromise the stability and future success of the Dominican Republic. In fact, there are four letters (in January, February, and March of 2010, in the Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period) in which Burden does appear in the same letter as the Help theme. This joint appearance reveals tension that is useful for our readings of these complex attitudes; the Dominican Republic *does* want to help Haiti, but Haiti is, *regardless*, still a burden. Even those letters that were not directly coded as the Burden theme sometimes evinced an attitude of obligation or begrudging willingness to help. This tension is further accentuated by the fact that helping Haiti is *part* of the burden. A common theme that appears in the data set is that after the earthquake struck Haiti, the Dominican Republic helped Haiti more than they could afford to or wanted to: “It’s true that, as the refrain goes, we have taken the bread out of our own mouths to give it our Haitian brother. . . .” While this particular instance would not be coded as Help due to the fact that it references the past, it demonstrates the sense of obligation and tension felt by the Dominican Republic with regard to its neighbor to the west. Sometimes the fear of that burden becomes more compelling than the desire to help. One author notes: “It has been necessary, and more than anything, human, the help that we have given to Haiti in its worst disaster, but one thing is what the heart dictates and another the rampant reality that subjects us to accepting our immediate limitations.” This excerpt demonstrates the diversity of emotions surrounding how the Dominican Republic is placed both geographical and familiarly, always at odds with and yet bound by its island and its obligation to the unwanted step-sibling that is Haiti.

We Should Help Them is unusual in that it is the only theme that appears as a negative, i.e. coded as the opposite of the theme, or what can be referred to in this instance as “we should not help them.” This instance appears on November 22, 2010, almost a year after the earthquake. The author of this letter notes that “We have to close the Dominican escape valve to the Haitians.[ellipses included] This will deepen their crisis. It seems inhuman... but it is probably the only salvation for those people...and also for the Dominicans.” The author talks as if learning to cope with the aftermath of a giant earthquake is like taking a set of training wheels off your child’s bike, as though Haiti must be taught through sternness to provide for itself. This statement could be read as reflective of a resurgence of resentment toward Haiti for still being in the midst of a recovery effort, and still relying heavily on outside help, particularly from the Dominican Republic.

However, there is also the other side of the coin in which the Dominican Republic recognizes that, burden or not, to help Haiti is to help themselves: “The principal support ought to come from the Dominican Republic. Firstly because if Haiti reconstructs itself and advances, so will we. Secondly, because we are the only country that shares the same mass of land with the suffering nation. Port-au-Prince and its infrastructures can be reconstructed.”

[VIEW FIGURES 6 and 6a HERE]

The last theme and second positive theme, We Should Work Together, first appears almost a year before the earthquake, on January 25, 2009. The last appearance of the theme is on November 9, 2011. Work Together is the only theme is which all sets

demonstrate eight appearances of the theme.¹⁴⁵ In Pre-Earthquake, with the exception of three appearances in May of 2009, and a gap in appearance during June, July, and August of 2009, the appearance of the theme prior to the earthquake is found fairly consistently, as can be seen in Figure 6.

After the earthquake, the appearance of the theme becomes very frequent for a little over two weeks, at the end of January of 2010, after which time it becomes less frequent, and goes back to appearing about every one or three months again. There is a large gap between February and the next appearance in May of 2010. After that early May appearance, there is another gap during the rest of May, June and July during which the theme is absent.

After the six month initial Honeymoon Period, the theme goes back to being nearly consistent in its appearance, with the exception of September and October of 2010 and most of March and April of 2011, during which the theme does not appear. However, after the May 2011 appearance of the theme (toward the end of the Honeymoon Period), there is a much larger gap, indicating that the frequency of the theme has slowed down greatly. The last appearance, on November 25, 2011, is much later than the previous appearance, nearly six months.

There is the same amount of appearances of the Work Together theme in the Pre-Earthquake period and the Post-Earthquake Long Term period, even if these appearances are not weighted equally, and because of this, there are actually less appearances relatively speaking (disproving H_2). This is perhaps encouraging on a certain level.

¹⁴⁵ Of course, these appearances appear to be relative to the time period because of how Figure 6.a. portrays them as equal percentages, but they are not weighted equally because, as previously underscored, Pre-Earthquake is a year long, Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period is six months, and Post-Earthquake Long Term is a year and a half.

Though the implication could be that there was no permanent effect on this attitude, which is a negative thing, when you consider this theme in contrast to the Help theme, which has virtually no appearances prior to the earthquake, it becomes encouraging there is at least some evidence of a continuing desire to work together with Haiti that is not brought on by the earthquake, but rather, existed beforehand. Additionally, there is an intense concentration of this theme immediately following the earthquake, which shows the increase in positive attitudes. This brief increase in positive sentiment may not necessarily last, but at least it demonstrates that these attitudes are capable of being affected by tragedies that cause the Dominican Republic to view its neighbor through a new and more positive lens.

A drop in appearance of the Work Together theme in Post-Earthquake Long Term can be explained by the relationship between Burden as well; as Haiti becomes more of a Burden, perhaps it also becomes more difficult for the Dominican Republic to envision working together with Haiti. Helping the Haitians is one thing, but working together implies being on equal footing with someone, and perhaps the lessened appearance of this theme in Post-Earthquake Long Term implies that after the earthquake, the Dominican Republic loses faith in Haiti's ability to accomplish this.

You can see throughout the We Should Work Together theme that proponents of working together with Haiti for the future of both countries demonstrate a humanitarian approach, but also a practical one that is underscored by the recognition of the two countries' inescapable "sink together, swim together" situation: "our country comes first...otherwise we will have two countries falling instead of one."

“Your brother is your closest neighbor,” declares one author days after the earthquake, emphasizing that there must be solidarity among peoples. The Work Together theme is evident throughout the data sets. Like Help, the theme of desire to work together with Haiti does not stem from uncomplicated emotions; the desire to work together with Haiti (and to help Haiti) is tempered both by the frustration of the Dominican Republic feeling like it is never recognized for the ways in which it aids Haiti: “We are defenseless against the constant attacks and infamies that other countries and organizations in the world throw at our people, incapable of recognizing that the Dominican Republic is the only nation that is supportive of the Haitian people.”

Throughout the letters in this data set the idea is communicated that the Dominican Republic feels that it cannot choose not to help Haiti because of the perceived reaction of the international community: “thousands [of Haitians] have entered illegally [into the Dominican Republic], while we pretend not to notice only to avoid appearing cruel and inhumane after the earthquake.” The Dominican Republic working together with Haiti is an obligation from which it cannot escape by virtue of living together on the same island. Though the Dominican Republic must feel a desire to help a neighbor in need, it may also feel sometimes that it has no choice but to maintain “the necessary harmony that must exist between countries that share territory . . . and one island.”

CONCLUSION

Samuel Martínez, ethnologist and expert on Haitian rights and migration with regard to the Dominican Republic, posits the question: Does anti-Haitianism really “have so powerful a hold on Dominican imagination as most observers seem to think?”¹⁴⁶ The intent of this study was to attempt a further understanding of the relationship between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, to examine Dominican attitudes toward Haitians, and to see whether these attitudes were capable of change, both short term and long term, as a result of a catastrophe.

Analyzing a potential change in attitude on the part of the Dominicans is important because it shows that attitudes *can* change, that people and populations are capable of the self-examination required to mold a different future, one not so fixated on the distinction between Haitians and Dominicans but rather on how two nations can come to terms with all that is entailed by the sharing of one island.

I have hypothesized that when the earthquake struck Haiti on January 12, 2010, this tragedy affected Dominican attitudes toward Haitians and toward Haiti. I believed this to be important because it had the capacity to demonstrate that such attitudes were capable of evolving despite a long history of racial, cultural, and migration-related tension.

To convey a shift in attitude, six themes were chosen: 1. Peaceful Invasion, 2. Haitianization, 3. Threat to National Identity, 4. Burden, 5. We Should Help Them, and 6. We Should Work Together. Using 267 letters (after the removal of duplicates) extracted

¹⁴⁶ Martínez, 2003, p. 88.

from the *Listín Diario* online newspaper and found by searching the term “haitiano” in the Editorial and Opinion pages, these letters were coded for the presence of these themes, and then mapped in charts to demonstrate the progression of the themes through three time periods, encapsulating three potentially distinct attitudes. These time periods were: Pre-Earthquake, 1/12/09-1/11/10; Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period, 1/12/10-7/12/10; and Post-Earthquake Long Term, 7/12/10-1/12/12. I expected that negative attitudes would decrease and positive attitudes would increase from Pre-Earthquake to Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period, and that from Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period to Post-Earthquake Long Term, negative attitudes would increase, but not as high as in Pre-Earthquake, and positive attitudes would decrease, but not to levels as low as in : Pre-Earthquake.

My hypotheses were:

H₁: Negative attitudes towards Haitians will decrease in the six months immediately after the earthquake (Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period, 1/12/10-7/12/10), and positive attitudes will increase.

H₂: Negative attitudes toward Haitians will increase after Post-Earthquake Honeymoon Period has elapsed, during the Post-Earthquake Long Term period (7/12/10-1/12/12), and positive attitudes will decrease, but attitudes will still remain less negative overall than found prior to the earthquake.

My results demonstrate that out of the six themes, four themes support both H₁ and H₂: Peaceful Invasion, Haitianization, Threat to National Identity, and We Should Help Them. All themes except for Burden support H₁. H₂ was supported across the board

except for the We Should Work Together Theme. So, H₁ and H₂ are solid but not supported across the board by every theme.

It is difficult to say whether or not attitudes toward Haitians have grown more positive in the long run because the data show evidence of a change in opinions only two years after the earthquake. However, even the mere fact of attitudes improving short term immediately after the earthquake shows promise, no matter how temporary. It demonstrates that this relationship can be repaired and worked upon. Furthermore, the results specific to the We Should Help Them theme indicate that a desire for social acceptability is not at play in all themes. While it could be argued that with regard to the negative themes that a decrease in these themes indicate a desire to exhibit a more social acceptable attitude—to appear less harsh toward Haitians while they are suffering within the Dominican Republic and the global community—the same cannot be argued for the Help theme. An increase in the appearance of this theme cannot be correlated with social acceptability theories and can be taken, therefore, as an indication of a genuine, if temporary, attitude change.

DISCUSSION

These findings point to the fact that catastrophe has the capacity to move people and acknowledge a common humanity in uniting enemies against a common problem. We can extrapolate these results to come up with suggestions for how to improve Dominican attitudes toward Haitians, or to improve relations between any two countries where such deep-seated and complicated tensions exist. One suggestion would be that if natural disaster has been shown to make attitudes more positive, then one should wish for or “create” such a disaster in the hope of changing attitudes. Of course, it is not likely, nor desirable that this should happen.

A more realistic suggestion would be to change policy and anticipate that over time, policies changes will affect attitudes for the better. This might include rewriting Dominican textbooks so as to portray Haitians in a more positive and realistic light, or enacting laws that prevent deportation on the basis of skin color or without evidence of undocumented status. Measures must be taken to establish immigration policies that both protect Dominican interests and do not violate human rights by unfairly denying Dominican birth certificates to those ethnic Haitian to whom citizenship is owed. It is undeniable that Haitian labor in the sugar bateyes has been an economic boon from which the Dominican Republic has benefited. Haitian labor has also contributed to the boom of the construction industry in the Dominican Republic. Perhaps work visas can be established that help to regulate migration to supply these industries.

Finally, though it is perhaps dubious to saddle politicians with a duty to take the high road, it is up to lawmakers—not just in the Dominican Republic but also in the United States and across the globe—to not engage in rhetoric that denigrates immigrants and encourages a culture of fear in order to win votes or maintain high approval ratings.

Many of the more extreme positions taken in the letters in this data set were espoused by politicians, and many of the things that they are published as saying verges on hate speech, something every society could surely do with less of.

There were other themes of interest that were exhibited in the letters that did not fall into the six categories chosen for coding this data set. Some of these themes were coded and then intentionally left out of the analysis by virtue of their appearing too infrequently; or not fitting within a category that would serve the stated aims of this study. As a matter of interest, and to give insight into how harsh some of the language is, some of those letters are mentioned here.

One author, detailing Haiti's main problems as the outward flight of educated individuals, high levels of corruption, and widespread poverty, compares Haiti to an alcoholic friend who gets cirrhosis of the liver because of his alcoholism; that without a doubt you would help him, pay his hospital bill, but that in the end, "this 'solution' does not eliminate his fundamental problem: alcoholism." Another author notes: "The Haitians, when they feel the pressure (real, not diffuse), there will be no need to tell them to go, or expel them. They will go of their own free will. Fear is the best dissuasion."

While these excerpts may be outliers and not representative of the general population, they are still, regardless, representative of a type of view that's being expressed and not reined in. In other words, even if they are outliers, the authors did not feel any concern about writing what they wrote, and the ownership of *Listin Diario* had no compunction in selecting these letters for publication.

I was surprised to read about some of the continued themes I found, in particular the attitudes toward the international community and also the somewhat common

viewpoint that cultural/racial tension between the Dominican Republic and Haiti would eventually lead to genocide.

With regard to the international community, I did not expect to see so much resentment expressed in these letters. As noted previously, there has been international pressure from human rights groups toward the Dominican Republic for its treatment of Haitian immigrants, and concerns about the statelessness of some of the Haitian deportees. Dominicans in these letters often express feeling persecuted by the international community both accusing the Dominican Republic of human rights abuses and simultaneously burdening the Dominican Republic with the obligation to help Haiti. There is a great deal of resentment throughout these letters toward members of the international community who have been involved with Haiti in the past and who, from the Dominican perspective, owe Haiti aid and assistance and yet elude this responsibility. There is also resentment against the United States for practicing what they do not preach, i.e. deporting large numbers of Latinos, among them, Haitians, and yet coming down hard on the Dominican Republic for its own deportation practices.

A letter in which the author discussed being glad to be for once recognized and thanked by a Haitian senator about six months before earthquake because normally no one thanks them, notes that essentially, the Dominican Republic never gets recognized for the help it gives to suffering nations while “while here there are characters and interest groups, manipulated from abroad, trying to distort the image of the country to be capable of commercial or political sanctions for its alleged “abuses” to Haitians.” He also notes something that becomes a theme in these letters, that this attitude toward Dominican Republic is actually a conspiracy to somehow muddy the nation’s reputation:

“foreigners and Dominicans, in a macabre alliance, spread their lies and their ideological prejudices to denounce the country as a concentration camp where we commit the most heinous abuses and slavery-like practices against our neighbors.”

Another recurring theme throughout this data set was the idea that if things continue the way they are; if the high levels of immigration (or the perception of the immigration at high levels) continue and Dominicans feel pressured, caged in, then this racial tension will burst out in a war or genocide. This is an intense thing to say, especially given that a genocide already has occurred, though given that it occurred in 1937, those who were old enough to experience it are probably not around anymore. One author notes: “Haiti will swallow us and bleeds us dry in a racial war worse than that of Rwanda.” This author seems also to imply that a genocidal war is inevitable.

There is also somewhat of an intriguing narrative surrounding deforestation. It is by no means common throughout the data set, but appears enough to be of interest. One author talks of “the communities where the massive presence of Haitians leaves them to feel the traumatic effects of social distortion and material depredation.” He mentions the “illegals caught burning carbon and finishing off our forests,” those who beg in the streets and cause violence. The accusation here is that the Haitians have cut down all their forests and have now come to ruin the Dominican Republic as they have ruined Haiti. In reality, Haiti was initially deforested long ago by sugar interests.

While many of these letters express sentiments that should provoke concern about Dominican attitudes toward Haitians, there are also positive notes. One author disagrees with the new constitution in the Dominican Republic in January of 2009, which made it

more difficult for Dominicans of Haitian ancestry to obtain citizenship or birth certificates, observing that it reminded him of the Trujillo years.

Further, I would argue that the capacity for change *is* something, and that the figures borne out by the data give some hope for future prospects in the Dominican Republic and in Haiti.

Perhaps the greatest change could come from acknowledging the past as a way to move forward. Sagás notes that: “No documentation with direct references to the massacre—before, during, or after it—has been found in Dominican archives (Cuello 1985). It was as if it never happened. And for many Dominicans, misinformed by Trujillo’s propaganda machine, it never did.”¹⁴⁷ While many other countries have ceremonies to mourn genocides and international courts to provide reparations and try to heal rifts between populations, there was no such occurrence in the Dominican Republic. Paulino notes how many decades after the 1937 massacre, “there are neither commemoration ceremonies nor monuments dedicated to the victims and legacy of this event.”¹⁴⁸

Despite there, there is evidence that attitudes toward Haiti are not one-dimensional. Appearing four times only after the earthquake—twice in January of 2010 and twice in February of 2010—were expressions of love for the Haitian people: “We believe that the earthquake and the attitude of our people buried forever our defense mechanism and that our love and solidarity with Haiti will remain evident forever,” and that “the destiny of two nations . . . united in one island depends on it. . . .” Though this

¹⁴⁷ Sagás, p. 47.

¹⁴⁸ Paulino, p. 270.

theme only appears four times, I think it's worth noting that it appears at all because there is a distinction one can draw between the desire to help another country in its time of need versus the capacity to establish an emotional connection with that country. It has been well established that the Dominican Republic has expressed through this data set a desire to help Haiti that increased after the earthquake hit in January of 2010, but to express the sentiment of love is a different matter entirely.

There is also hope evident in the fact that Dominicans voted a couple decades ago for former presidential candidate José Francisco Peña Gomez even though he was fairly dark conveyed as being Haitian: “That the maneuvers of the Balaguer government prevented Peña Gomez from becoming president matters less to the present discussion than that the majority of the Dominican population went to the polls and cast their ballots in favor of a black man who, in addition, is reputedly of Haitian descent.”¹⁴⁹

Dominican attitudes toward Haiti are not simple, and cannot be oversimplified. This study helps demonstrate that while they may be negative attitudes toward Haitians in the Dominican Republic and while anti-Haitianism may be alive and well in the country, these negative attitudes do not stand alone, they are combined with and complicated by positive attitudes and emotions. As Martínez notes: “Were the whole story to be told, the end product would be a story so full of contradictory emotions and impulses—of tenderness and violence, love and hatred, incorporation and rejection of the Haitian “other” that no theme as monolithic as “anti-Haitian ideology” could contain it.¹⁵⁰ While media representations of elite opinion cannot tell the “whole story,” they can offer insight

¹⁴⁹ Torres-Saillant, 1998, p. 133.

¹⁵⁰ Martínez, 2003, p. 81.

into national opinion. With the passage of time, the empathy surrounding the earthquake and its victims will probably fade, as it is the human condition to forget and to move on. However, the positive impact generated by the earthquake on the attitudes exhibited in these editorial letters is indicative of a capacity for change that, while not necessarily permanent, offers a glimpse into a more constructive and symbiotic relationship between these two countries that may one day be possible.

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