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**The Mobility of Labor Under Advanced Capitalism:
Dominican Migration to the United States**

By

Ramona Hernández

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New
York.**

1997

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Abstract

*The Mobility of Workers Under Advanced Capitalism:
Dominican Migration to the United States.*

By

Ramona Hernández

Advisor: Professor Frank Bonilla.

The Mobility of Workers Under Advanced Capitalism: Dominican Migration to the United States offers a detailed account of Dominicans after migration. The study, based primarily on census data and ethnographic research, provides an assessment of the socio-economic conditions of Dominicans residing in New York City (i.e. state of poverty, relationship with the labor market, institutional support, quality of neighborhoods, and the like), their human capital qualities (i.e. education, skills, job experience, etc.), in light of the changing economy of the city. It also examines the likelihood for this group, made up mostly of blue collar and unskilled workers, to move up economically in a social space which increasingly demands skilled workers with school-related training.

From a theoretical point of view, the study proposes a new understanding of labor migration under advanced capitalism, suggesting that their mobility may be encouraged by the sending society on its own. The basic argument is that post-1965 Third World immigration to the United States reflects the movement of an absolute or relative surplus labor force from the sending society to a host country that did not necessarily show a demand for their labor. A second argument developed in this project challenges the traditional correlation between migration and economic progress. High levels of poverty among Dominicans in the U.S. as well as their disconnection from the process of production are the direct result of their arrival into a society which no longer needs their labor.

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I owe a great deal of gratitude to Professor Frank Bonilla, my advisor and mentor. Convincing me that I was right for the job, when it came to explaining Dominican migration in a context of a shrinking labor market, he taught me to distrust simplistic approaches, what sounded good, or was easily apparent. With him I also learned that scholarly wisdom and academic rigor need not be devoid of caring, commitment, respect, and involvement when human beings are the subjects of one's study. I learned as much from his theoretical insights as from his

love for the Puerto Rican people, of which he is a part.
Hence probably my unconditional love for Dominicans.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my father, Ramón Hernández, a man who learned how to read at the age when others enter college, and taught me to feel compassion for those in need and in pain. To my mother, Mercedes Hernández, a wise woman who though barely literate, always led the way and never doubted her equality with respect to men. Her actions taught me how to uphold my value as a woman irrespective of the value others might wish to assign to me. To my son, Alejandro, who I hope will continue the struggle until, thanks to his devotion, it ceases to be necessary. To my husband, Francisco Torres, whose invaluable support defies measurements. He has done his job as well as mine with Alejandro during my writing and has waited for me patiently and unobtrusively.

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THE MOBILITY OF WORKERS UNDER ADVANCED CAPITALISM: DOMINICAN MIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

Introduction

The Mobility of Labor in Response to Demand

The international mobility of workers from developing to advanced societies after World War II has been interpreted in light of the connection between supply and demand. The supply of workers in a given region and the demand for them in others has traditionally explained their movement. Job-seekers from less developed regions feel the compulsion to migrate to advanced societies where they expect to find use for their labor. Their decision to leave home is often explained through either of two theoretical paradigms. The first known as the equilibrium theory views the migration process as the result of the individual worker's own rational choice. The second, known as the historical-structural theory, emphasizes macro socio-economic changes which are beyond the control of the workers but whose impacts create the conditions which force them to leave. Receiving societies, in turn, are conceived as areas of labor scarcity. The advancement

of technology and the changes in production there have created the need for a specific labor force to serve in undesirable, emerging jobs commonly rejected by native workers. Immigrants from poor sending societies with a high incidence of surplus labor become the ideal pool for such jobs (Portes 1978). Such, then, is the context within which post 1965 Third World immigration to the United States has been generally viewed.

I.

Scholarly consensus supports the notion that the shifting of the U.S. economy from manufacturing to service after the 1950s generated a bifurcated labor market which mainly required highly skilled and low or unskilled workers. Earning structures reflected a similar polarization: skilled jobs were generally well paid while the low-skilled jobs were poorly paid. A strict rigidity overtook the labor market lessening the chances of upward mobility among workers. Well paid jobs increasingly tended to depend on the accumulation of human capital that exhibited sophisticated and specialized knowledge. Low paid jobs, in turn, tended to draw from a poorly educated

labor force whose members disproportionally came from ethnic minority and immigrant groups.

Old industrial cities like New York reflected the economic changes and the polarity. Decaying standardized manufacturing production at one end and a booming high-tech service production at the other. But the duality reflected also the mushrooming of a new industrial setting associated with low-levels of capital and intensive labor and a fast-changing fashion industry. Characteristic of this new industrial setting were sweat shops, informal manufacturing, the volatile production of goods produced seasonably under subcontracting arrangements. The service oriented economy too produced a variety of low-paying and low-skill jobs, such as delivery boys, messengers, maids, parking-attendants, retail sales persons, and the like. In addition, jobs emerged through the purchasing power of a new clientele, namely the high-paid workers of the service economy who consumed a variety of custom-made goods, from gourmet food, to expensive furniture and clothing, to personal-care services (Sassen 1988:145).

A common feature among the two booming job markets was their need for a very cheap and politically powerless

labor force. The competitiveness of the new manufacturing sector sprang from the effective reduction of costs of production. By the same token, the pay structure of the service sector remained polarized, with well paid jobs at the top, an explosion of poorly paid jobs at the bottom, and relatively fewer jobs at the middle level (Harrison and Bluestone 1988). Sociologist Saskia Sassen has argued that a relative shortage of labor existed since the labor reserve army of native workers had been considerably undermined by the political processes of the 1960s among women, Blacks, and Latinos and the economic aid to the destitute provided by the welfare state. The mid of the 1960s then found cities like New York with employers who yearned for a suitable supply of workers while the immigration of job-seekers grew enormously (Sassen 1984; 1988).

The unproblematic rapport between supply and demand in the labor market would seem to imply that once in the receiving society migrant workers had no trouble in getting jobs. One gets the idea that undesirable jobs, rejected by natives, went unfulfilled until new immigrants took them. One wonders what would have been the fate of

those undesirable jobs if migrants had remained home. One could argue, hypothetically, that the lack of suitable workers may have forced employers to increase the wages paid for those jobs. But we may never know with any certainty. Migrants have already come, and some scholars believe that they have kept low-wage jobs alive (Marshall 1983; Sassen 1988; Borjas 1990). Still, though, we should never underestimate the craftiness of capitalists in obtaining production/accumulation while avoiding an increase in the cost of labor. At any rate, a more pressing issue for us here is to see whether migrants, once in the receiving society, do get the jobs they came here to get and fulfill the dream of economic progress that motivated their migratory process.

II.

The understanding of the international mobility of workers as a direct response to a demand for labor in the receiving society bears some examination. Whether workers move responding to their own initiative or to macro-economic forces beyond their control, the essential idea is that they enter into a migratory movement in response

to a call from the receiving society. That call entails the promise of a job, for those who did not have one, and a better job for those who had jobs before migration. Thus, workers and jobs appear aprioristically arranged in a union that has the potential for pleasing everyone. The view overlooks the complications or short-comings related to a changing capitalist economy whose main concern is the increasing of profits.

Standard thought on migration assumes that jobs waited migrants in the receiving society. From that perspective, the migratory process, invariably appears as a successful enterprise on the part of job-seekers whose mobility from society A (the home country) to society B (the host country) gives them the opportunity to become active members of the labor force. By implication, the view overlooks the possibility of marginalization and long-standing poverty among immigrants in connection with their exclusion from the process of production. The arrangement also distorts the nature of capitalism as a global system of production. Capitalism is increasingly perceived as a globalizing order whose mobility of capital and technology from country to country tends to eliminate

the constraints of national boundaries. But globalization occurs as a result of the system's need to expand accumulation. Expansion spurred by accumulation is present in all capitalist countries. The use of technology in production as a way to decrease the use of labor is a regular modality of the system that applies across all capitalist formations connected through the process of globalization. There is nothing that exonerates workers in the Dominican Republic from expulsion from the process of production as a direct result of the system's needs of accumulation. Nor can we believe that they will easily reenter the process of production in the United States, a country that just as the Dominican Republic, is informed by the same system of production and the same needs of accumulation.

The study of the relationship between Dominican migrants and the New York City labor market offers a different revealing picture. The Dominican picture, contrary to what many had imagined, shows a group facing economic hardship as result of unemployment and underemployment. Once in New York City, Dominicans confront the reality of a changing labor market which

increasingly requires workers with skills and training they do not have. As Dominicans came the jobs they had the best chance of qualifying for, were disappearing, and the competition for them grew. In Washington Heights, the neighborhood with the largest concentration of Dominicans in New York City, peddling various tropical products and other low-price consumer goods has become pervasive. The two largest job-markets of street-vendors and taxi-drivers (whether regulated or unregulated), appear to have become saturated. As the largest group of workers there, Dominicans often complain about other newcomers, their compatriots included, who also come to share their space to make a living. The scenario described above seems to us to defy the presumption of a smooth relationship between supply and demand in the job markets in the receiving society. The precarious conditions of most Dominicans suggest either that the host country did not need workers when Dominicans arrived, or that it did not need specifically the labor of Dominicans.

An Alternative Reading of Labor Mobility

I.

Our argument on this study is that post 1965 Third World immigration to the United States reflects the movement of an absolute or relative surplus labor force from the sending society to a host country that did not necessarily show a demand for their labor. The fact that immigrants came did not mean that they were needed or wanted. The proposed argument rests on the following assumptions:

1- The continued internationalization of production via the mobility of capital and other inputs for production generated the use of cheap labor in peripheral nations reducing thereby the need for labor mobilization across geographies.

2- Structural changes in the system of production, particularly the shift from a manufacturing to a service oriented economy, led to a restructured labor market, essentially credentialist, which tended to require workers with school-related knowledge. Low skilled and

unskilled workers increasingly became redundant since the changed economy had failed to generate enough of the kinds of jobs they were equipped for.

3- An internal labor reserve army already existed in the United States, consisting of low skilled and unskilled workers who had lost their jobs through the economic transformation. These workers either failed to reenter the process of production or entered under irregular conditions, economic growth notwithstanding.

4- The accumulation of capital tended to depend increasingly on the use of technology and less so on living labor, thus dislocating all kinds of workers in the process.

5- The growing influx of immigrants possessing similar human capital (i.e. skills, educational levels, English language abilities) and demographic characteristics (i.e. age, sex) tended to increase the size of the supply of low and unskilled workers. This tendency made for competition among workers, enabling employers to substitute them

easily on the basis of subjective criteria such as race, sex, and ethnicity.

The Changing Economy: No Need For Extra Hands

II.

By the 1960s, it was clear to many that labor supply had begun to exceed the demand. The economic changes, particularly the flight of manufacturing capital out of New York City, had begun to produce noticeable effects. The restructuring process dislocated productive jobs directly as well as a whole variety of other jobs that were tangentially connected to the manufacturing sector. Entire industrial headquarters moved out, and with them employment opportunities. From 1960 to 1980 the total number of jobs had decreased in this city from 3,538,000 to 3,302,000. From 1966 to 1976, the employment-to-population ratio (perhaps the best statistical tool to measure the capacity of the economy to absorb workers) in New York City declined from 55% to 48% (Torres 1995:193). The manufacturing sector alone, by far the single largest employer up the 1970s, lost over 600,000 jobs between 1960 and 1990, adding not one single new job in the sector.

This loss, whose repercussions would be felt among most members of the labor force, would have far more devastating effects among blue-collar, low skilled and unskilled workers, for whom the sector provided the greatest number of jobs. From 1970 to 1986 the restructuring led to the elimination of 510,000 jobs in fields that required less than twelve years of education (Kasarda 1985). Furthermore, the vast majority of the dislocated workers would find no reentry into the expanding service sector.

Scholars believe that the decline in manufacturing jobs caused increasing levels of poverty and economic hardship among those groups who were associated with the industry. Sociologist Clara Rodriguez has argued that the high incidence of poverty among Puerto Ricans in the 1960s stems from their dislocation from the manufacturing sector which still by the 1960s concentrated over 60% of the community's labor force (Rodriguez 1979:208).

Sociologist William Julius Wilson has likewise contended that the emergence of an underclass among Blacks is connected to widespread structural joblessness in the inner-city provoked by the disappearance of blue-collar

jobs which required less than a high school education and the development of new jobs in the service sector for which they were ill-equipped (Wilson 1987).

The scenario thus far described would suggest that the period of the economic transformation was a tough time for blue-collar, low skilled and unskilled workers. Not only were well-paid manufacturing jobs exiting the city, but the restructuring process seemed to have reduced employment options at all levels. In effect, economist Andrés Torres estimated that from 1960 to 1970 the secondary sector lost 10% of its share, declining from 38.8% to 29.9%. More importantly, the proportion of jobs generated through the development of what Sassen has called "down-graded jobs," associated with the manufacturing and service sectors during the restructuring process and served primarily by immigrants, could not do much to increase the proportion of jobs of the secondary sector, which in 1980 retained the same number of jobs it had had in 1960 (Torres 1995:48).

In the 1960s, Whites began to leave the city and their flight would accelerate in the two decades that followed. By 1970, Puerto Ricans and Blacks, males and

females, all those who could afford to exit the city, packed up and left. The census figures indicate that from 1970 to 1980, New York City lost 10.4% of its overall population, a net figure of 824,261 persons. In the meantime, Dominicans and other immigrants, particularly from Latin America, began to come and settle into the city. The newcomers, came endowed with similar skills and school-related-knowledge. They were young, energetic, and eager to find work. Yet, the newcomers found themselves trapped in a city which increasingly lacked the kinds of jobs that they could hold. They came in to witness the decline of blue-collar jobs and to witness their likelihood of employment seriously diminished. Thus, the act of migrating to an advanced society did not necessarily provide many of them with the economic progress and the social mobility they sought.

Emigration as an Expulsion of Workers

I.

A second argument put forward in this study is that emigration from the Dominican Republic corresponded to a

government initiative taken during Joaquin Balaguer's first presidency. Though not officially promulgated, the Dominican State deliberately implemented a de facto policy of encouraging people to leave home. Initially, the strategy sought to expatriate political dissidents and revolutionaries, mostly members of the left-wing movement and others, who, having participated in the 1965 revolution, worried the newly established Balaguer government, the Dominican ruling class, and the United States. Emigration also had a long-term goal for the Dominican government and the power structure, and it had to do with economic development in the country. Emigration provided a pipeline through which the country could systematically eliminate unwanted and unneeded surplus laborers whom the new system of production was unable to absorb. The exodus could thus prevent the eruption of civil disobedience and social unrest caused by an impoverished people who could find no way to make a decent living there.

Massive emigration from the Dominican Republic to the United States began in 1966 with the coming to power of Joaquin Balaguer. The large contingents of Dominicans who

had left their native land from 1963 to 1965 came in the wake of the political instability triggered by the assassination of dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo in 1961 and the discontent that culminated in a military coup d'etat in 1963 and in a civil war at the beginning of 1965. Upon assuming the direction of the Dominican State in 1966, the Balaguer government tackled two principal concerns: economic development and political stability. Economically, the government implemented a model that eased the entrance of United States investment and tended to emphasize industrial production, commercial trade and finance, to the detriment of agricultural production. Politically, Balaguer put in place a reign of terror that virtually dismembered the opposition through frequent incarcerations, assassinations, and the expatriation of political dissidents. The modernization of the army and the national police forces, with assistance from the Pentagon and the CIA, provided the necessary infrastructure to impose order ruthlessly by the sword in the country, as may be gathered from the fact that Balaguer's first two terms in government left a toll of over 3,000 people killed (Moya Pons 1995).

During Balaguer's first 12-years regime, the Dominican Republic would be characterized by dichotomous tendencies. On the one hand, there was unprecedented economic growth, via the expansion of industrial production and the business sectors. On the other hand, there were growing unemployment levels provoked by the intensification of industrial capital, an inadequate policy of job-growth, and the internal mobilizations of uprooted people in search of jobs from the country-side to the city. In the end, Balaguer's economic policies resulted in a growing surplus of laborers unabsorbed by the expansionist economy. Similarly, the government gave way to the formation of an urban middle class associated with the expansion of public jobs and the commercial and financial sectors. Its purchasing power activated and expanded the levels of consumption of the internal market, while concomitantly, growing numbers of the working class, unemployed and underemployed, remained disenfranchised since they could not afford even their basic necessities. From 1970 to 1974, the Dominican Republic experienced the highest economic growth rate of any Latin American country, with an average return profit in net gains of

over 54% in the industrial sector.

At the same time, during the same years the country had an official unemployment rate of over 20%. Over half of the working people were underemployed. The bottom fifth of the population with the lowest income experienced an extraordinary loss, reflecting a fall of over a half of its income. And 75% of the people did not consume the number of calories and nutrients required to maintain an adequate diet. Neither the administrations of the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano, which ruled the country from 1978 to 1986, nor that of the returning Balaguer, in the period 1986-90 generated any improvement in the lives of most people at home. During the 1980s, or "the lost decade," in the words of Dominican economist Bernardo Vega, most workers who needed to work for a living suffered. Many were dislocated from the process of production by an economy that introduced technology into production and rehearsed economic practices that did not require much living labor.

New development policies (i.e. export-led economy and tourism) further internationalized the Dominican economy. The level of importation of foreign inputs increased

considerably, producing trade deficits and loss of revenues. The problem of unemployment and underemployment augmented. To make matters worse, the large national debt and the country's inability even to pay its interests, provoked the intervention of the International Monetary Fund whose severe economic restrictions, particularly in the public sector, harmed the material well-being of many more people. In the process, members of the middle class, who may have remained unaffected before, now suffered displacement. They were affected by the decline of well-paid jobs and by the loss of the purchasing power of their earnings before an ascending inflation. Between 1980 and 1983, the number of employed people in the modern private sector went down from 36.8% to 32.5%. Concomitantly, the number of workers in the informal sector rose from 26.7% to 32.5% (Ceara Hatton 1990a:146).

II.

Both the United States and the Dominican governments collaborated in fomenting Dominican migration by setting the appropriate infrastructure and logistic, from the modernization and expansion of consular services to the

expediting of the official documents required to emigrate. But both participating actors had different agendas. Through its involvement, the United States sought to rid the small Caribbean country of unruly and deviant political discontents perceived as obstructing the access of U.S. capitalists into the country. Some in Washington may have also believed that the country was in danger of becoming a communist or socialist state. The intentions of Washington became clear in the role American diplomats played during the tumultuous years after the assassination of dictator Rafael L. Trujillo in 1961 and during the transitional government headed by President Rafael Bonnelly.

The Dominican Republic also sought the emigration of political dissidents. It was a way to disarticulate and eliminate left-wing movements, which at the moment, threatened to disrupt a government that had forced its way in. But for the Dominican power structure it was more than that. Emigration would also function as a permanent channel through which unwanted and unneeded workers would be discarded. The channel would facilitate the expatriation of the relative or absolute surplus

population generated by the system of production.

Ironically, the shipping out of unneeded labor, subsequently became, through the frequent remittances of the emigrants to their relatives in the native land, an indispensable pillar that has helped sustain the status quo in the Dominican Republic.

The emigration of people as a long-term plan, combined with an extremely persuasive birth control campaign begun precisely in 1966, targeted the poor and succeeded in reducing population pressure in the country. Both strategies, one fiercely promulgated (birth control) and the other silently enforced (emigration), sought to regulate the lives of people, particularly those who had (or will) become redundant in one way or another. The birth control policy, widely disseminated throughout the country and systematically enforced from 1966 to the present day, propagated a new ideology among poor people. The right to procreation was connected to one's abilities to secure a decent living for one's future children. Of course, birth control advisors would have been at a loss for words had a Dominican peasant or unskilled urban worker asked them how in the world they could expect to

earn a decent living in a society that was rapidly closing the doors of the job market to them.

Emigration would provide the answer to the question. Stimulating those who could find no job or generate a decent living at home, simply to pack up with their children and leave seemed to be the unspoken answer. After all, what was being done in this two-thirds of an island of the Caribbean was not totally new. The emergent Dominican State of 1966 adopted development policies which had already been put into practice in the neighboring island of Puerto Rico during the 1950s. Government planners had thought that Puerto Rico suffered from an excess of people that exerted pressure on the economy and caused the country's high rates of poverty and unemployment. The encouragement of Puerto Ricans to leave home to the United States and the adoption of a birth control policy were the two antidotes prescribed as the cure to this country's economic ills. The development policies generated successful results. An increasing number of Puerto Ricans left every year for the North American mainland just as the birth rate went down. At the end, almost one third of the Puerto Rican women within

reproductive ages had been sterilized.

Just as they had in Puerto Rico, the promotion of emigration and the implementation of family planning techniques generated successful results in the Dominican Republic. Abandoning the homeland became the order of the day for a vast number of Dominicans. Leaving that country, they thought, would ensure them a decent living and a better future for their children. During the 1970s, an annual average of 16,000 Dominicans arrived legally in the United States. By the 1980s, the annual average had risen to over 30,000. In the meantime, many of the poor people who had internalized the belief that their poverty had to do with their procreation patterns, massively began to use birth control methods. As a result, we witness the drastic reduction of the fertility rate from 7 children per woman in 1960 to 3.7 in 1990.

Life in the Metropolis

The final argument developed in this project challenges the traditional correlation between migration and economic progress. The question of social mobility among migrants who moved from a poor to a richer country

has been generally approached from the understanding that people emigrate because they are better off after migration. Nor is the assumption entirely unjustified. Indeed, one could ask, how the Dominican exodus, other than those individual cases involving political persecution, makes any sense unless the immigrants find some rewards for their quest? Some scholars on Dominican migration attest to the evidence of social mobility and economic progress among U.S. Dominicans. Their findings clearly suggest that for Dominicans migration to the United States has indeed been a wise move, yielding both material and psychological benefits (see, for instance, the works of Hendricks 1974; Portes and Guarnizo 1991; George 1990; and Grasmuck and Pessar 1991). These scholars point to economic progress among Dominicans as reflected in their ability to find jobs, to become business owners, to acquire basic electric goods, or to sustain a middle-class life-style back home. The present study has chosen to tackle the following issues: whether the findings of the scholars reflect the nature of the group or isolated instances, the representativeness of the success attributed to a Dominican entrepreneur sector, the

demonstrable socio-economic profile of Dominican women in places like New York City, the presumed elasticity of the job markets available to Dominicans, and the validity of assessing the socio-economic conditions of Dominicans in the receiving society by comparison with their former standard of living back home. The fact that some Dominicans, either through return migration or remittance, were able to sustain a middle-class life-style back in the Dominican Republic, says very little, if anything, about the current socio-economic conditions of Dominican New Yorkers. At most, the evaluation of Dominicans in the immigrant land based upon their country of origin, outside of their immediate social contexts, could provide only a false sense of their socio-economic conditions as immigrants.

Besides, evidence exists to dispel the view of migration as a straight path between Dominicans and economic progress. We have the empirical observation of the New York City Dominican community, our personal involvement with the everyday struggles of many Dominicans, the emergent voices of Dominicans who testify to the plight of the diaspora, and the statistical

portrait of Dominicans in the U.S. censuses. From these sources, rather than social mobility or economic progress, one gathers a picture of stagnation, despair, and widespread poverty produced by a lack of jobs and miserably low-salaries. We have the portrait of an immigrant group of people that after thirty long years of intense struggle for survival still has far to go before reaching the stage of speaking for itself.

Our argument is predicated on the understanding that there is more than one version of the Dominican diaspora. In the case of the majority of the Dominicans who came to New York City, one could safely argue that the movement has afforded them little more than a shift of scenery. Poor at home, they continued to be poor in the modern city. Many had no jobs at home, and after leaving, many still remain jobless. In 1980, more than one in every three Dominicans who lived in this city was unable to satisfy his/her basic necessities. This Dominican had an income below the official poverty line, and more than one out of every two homes headed by a Dominican woman was below the poverty line. But the truth of the matter is that this invisible line reveals little about the socio-

economic conditions of many other Dominicans whose income, regardless of its relation to the poverty line, hardly suffices to satisfy their basic needs.

Poverty among Dominicans has extended beyond the household unit or groups of families. It marks their neighborhoods with a high incidence of poverty, population density, violent crime, lack of vital social services, and deteriorating public institutions. Washington Heights/Inwood, where almost one out of every two of its residents is of Dominican descent, provides ample illustrations. There, in 1990, almost one of every two Dominican homes lived below the poverty line, and one in every five did not have a phone. The same area exhibited the worst scenario of crowded homes in the borough. The lack of homes available combined with increasing rents have forced many Dominican families to double up and resort to informal housing arrangements, such as the spontaneous creation of rooms in the basements of many apartment buildings, with the hazards that such measures may entail. Small children lacked day-care centers and school-age children did not fare necessarily better. In 1993 the Citizen's Committee for Children estimated that

as many as 13,561 Washington Heights young children were on waiting lists, to receive day care services. During the same year, the neighborhood school district, School District 6, which concentrates the highest number of Dominican students, figured among the most overcrowded districts in the entire city. It also ranked among those districts with the lowest percentage of pupils scoring at or above grade level in either reading or mathematics, and among the five school districts with the highest drop out rates in the City.

During the mid 1960s, many Dominicans began to leave home in search of jobs, economic progress, and social mobility. They were let go by a society which was unable to satisfy their needs and honor their right to lead a decent living. Having left home, they came to the United States to fulfill their dreams. The irony is that for many of them the mobility from one country to another, did not lead to jobs, nor a better life. In the immigrant abode, Dominicans were faced first with an indifferent welcome and later with an unfriendly society which promulgates laws to get rid of them and send them back home. While the previous Dominican governments remained

passive to potential deportations and massive returns, the newly elected Dominican chief of State used the airwaves of a Spanish-language TV station in New York in September 1996 to urge his compatriots to stay put in the United States. In the meantime, while both States, the U.S. and the Dominican Republic, continue to play dice with the lives of disempowered Dominicans, by passing "the bucket" back and forth, Dominicans in the diaspora mind their own business and have children, form families, and build alliances with others who find themselves in similar circumstances and dream of a better future.

THE STRUCTURE

This study has been organized into four (4) chapters.

Chapter I:

This chapter reviews and evaluates the major causes upheld by most authors to explain massive Dominican migration to the United States after 1966. The chapter begins by reviewing the demographic classification given to U.S. Dominican immigrants. It challenges the widely held socio-economic profile introduced by Ugalde, Bean, and Cardenas in 1979 which construes Dominican migrants as members of a formerly employed, educated, urban middle-class. Unlike all the previous authors, this chapter uses data from the Immigration and Naturalization Service to construct a socio-economic profile of Dominican immigrants coming to United States from 1966 through 1990. These data reveal that Dominicans come predominantly from the working class sectors and that the majority of them had no job at the time of emigration. This chapter also provides a detailed analysis of the major economic policies implemented in the Dominican Republic (i.e. import substitution and industrial expansion, the orientation

towards a tertiary economy, etc.) during the last three decades, emphasizing the role the United States has played in the design of these policies. The chapter proposes to view the Dominican exodus as a direct outcome of the development policies and initiatives implemented by the Balaguer government and the Dominican ruling class, in collaboration with the United States after 1966.

Chapter II:

Chapter II provides statistical descriptions of Dominicans in the labor market in New York City. Using census data for 1980 and 1990, the chapter assesses their labor market status in comparison with other major ethnic groups in the city. Indicators such as annual earnings, labor force participation rates, levels of unemployment, industrial distribution, and occupations are reviewed. In addition, the chapter makes an assessment of the needs of the labor market with respect to the human capital that Dominicans bring at the time of their arrival. The section seeks to explore whether the mismatch theory, as it relates to human capital qualities such as training and schooling or geographical settlements and job growth, can

adequately apply to Dominican workers. The chapter notes that Dominicans arrived at a moment when the economy was undergoing significant transformations which impacted in the use of and need for labor. The systematic decline of blue-collar manufacturing jobs directly affected the likelihood of employment among Dominicans.

Chapter III:

In chapter III we examine the state of poverty among Dominicans in New York City, both as individuals and as community. The leading reasons advanced to explain poverty and economic hardship among people (i.e. labor market activities, education, dependency ratios, and female-headed households) are reviewed. While each one of them could certainly be used to explain the state of poverty and despair among Dominicans, we propose to look at the devalorization of Dominican workers, via their low wages, their state of superexploitation in the labor market, and their lack of jobs as fundamental causes for their socio-economic conditions in New York City.

Chapter IV:

This chapter considers the equilibrium and the historical-structural models as the two theoretical assumptions held by most authors to explain the mobility of labor from a less developed to a more advanced society. Besides reviewing their major differences, this chapter provides a look into what we think represents a point of convergence among the two theoretical paradigms, namely, their common understanding of the migratory movement as emanating from the supply and demand dynamic in the labor market of the receiving society. Both theories propose that workers move in response to a need for workers in the receiving society, undermining the role of the sending society as the possible instigator of the migratory process originated on its shores. The troubles and the difficulties most Dominicans have faced in the labor market in New York City since their arrival provide the grounds for an alternative view of the mobility of workers between capitalist social formations. We propose to perceive migrants as workers who have been essentially dislocated from the process of production in the sending society and whose movement in search of jobs does not

imply a need for them nor the promise of a job in the receiving society. The mobility of Dominicans has been understood as a movement between two different nation-states at different stages of economic development.

Grounded on the theoretical claims of Frank Bonilla and Ricardo Campos to elucidate Puerto Rican labor migration, this chapter calls for a view in which Dominican workers are seen within the logic of advanced capitalist production. Dominican workers move within one large, transnational labor market whose patterns of accumulation rapidly change, increasingly undermining and in the process the use of living labor whether in the United States or in the Dominican Republic.

Chapter I

CAUSES BEHIND DOMINICAN MIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

Massive emigration from the Dominican Republic began in 1962 after the death of dictator Rafael Leónidas Trujillo, who ruled the country tyrannically from 1930 to 1961. During the dictatorship, international migration was severely restricted and only a few Dominicans, particularly diplomats and well to do people who were known to favor the government, were granted visas. It has been argued that Trujillo's emigration policies were motivated by the desire to prevent discontented Dominicans from attacking and discrediting his government internationally (Frank Canelo 1982:41). Historian Roberto Cassá situates Trujillo's emigration policies within a general context of population increase, which the dictator firmly emphasized during the entire length of his regime. Population increase under Trujillo resulted from the direct intervention of the State in three ways: the systematic encouragement of childbirth, the sponsoring of European immigration, and the strict control of emigration

from the country. Trujillo thought that an increase in population would fortify and solidify his regime. In 1920, population reached 900,000 people, yet by the end of Trujillo's regime it had increased to over 3 million people (Cassá 1982:572).

In relation to Trujillo's firm population growth policy, historian Frank Moya Pons noted decades ago that Trujillo's regime strongly believed that the country was severely underpopulated and that there existed a shortage of laborers. The assumption that the lack of workers prevented the economic development of the country, led Trujillo to pursue the numerical growth of the population. Early in his regime, Trujillo's government encouraged childbearing, along with European immigration, by offering incentives to large families, as a way to remedy labor scarcity (Moya Pons 1977:516).

Regarding population movement during Trujillo, Eugenia George reasons that towards the end of his government the dictator may have had economic as well as political motives for restricting emigration. By this time, George explains, Trujillo had already confronted

strong internal oppositions within the country and was also aware of the democratic reforms which threatened to dissolve similar governments in Latin America. Information concerning his regime then needed to be controlled. Concurring with Moya Pons' views of labor shortage during Trujillo's regime, George concludes that Trujillo's control of population movement developed in response to the direct exigencies of a new productive system. She points out that Trujillo's "Policies restricting mobility within and off the island were formulated to ensure the supply of skilled workers to the burgeoning import-substitution industries of Santo Domingo, as well as agricultural producers on whom the cultivation of traditional export and food crops hinged" (George 1990:29).

As indicated in **Graph 1**, in 1963, after Trujillo's assassination, the number of Dominicans admitted under permanent status to the United States rose to 10, 683 from 4,603 it had been in 1962. Emigration continued to increase progressively, as witnessed in the annual number of Dominicans who left their homeland between 1962 and

1991. Between 1962 and 1972 the annual mean of Dominican migrants was 11,445. This number increased to over 16,000 during the 1970s and to over 30,000 during the 1980s. Similarly, since 1983 the number of permanent residencies granted to Dominicans has exceeded the 20,000 per-country limit set by the United States. In 1991 and 1992 the number of Dominicans admitted reached over 40,000 each year.¹ The following section will examine the forces that motivated Dominicans to abandon their country after Trujillo's death, and, more importantly, why they selected the United States as their point of destination.

In examining the causes behind massive Dominican migration to the United States, researchers have focused on the demographic background of the migrants, particularly their social class status and their geographical region. The pioneer research of Nancie L. Gonzalez, (1970; 1976), Glenn Hendricks (1974), Chiqui

1.

In 1991 the Dominican Republic was the third leading source country where permanent resident status was granted to spouses of U.S. citizens and where over 50% of the children of U.S. citizens were born (*Statistical Yearbook of Immigration and Naturalization Service* 1991). Both of these categories are exempted from quota limitations.

Vicioso (1976), Saskia Sassen (1979),² and J. Frank Canelo (1982) characterize post-1965 Dominican migrants as predominantly rural, poorly educated, poor, and mostly unskilled and jobless workers. Implicit in most of these studies was the understanding that these migrants perceived their movement to the United States as the solution to their socio-economic problems.

However, Antonio Ugalde, Frank. D. Bean, and Gilbert Cárdenas (1979) challenged this notion by arguing, instead, that most Dominican migrants were mostly from the urban middle class sectors of the Dominican Republic. They were not the poorest nor came from the ranks of the unemployed (1979:243-4). Contrary to previous research, which depended on small ethnographic surveys undertaken in specific rural communities in the Dominican Republic, Ugalde, Bean, and Cárdenas' study was based on a national survey on mortality of 25,000 households and 125,000 people, conducted in 1974 by Secretaría de Estado de Salud Pública y Asistencia Social, and financially supported by

2.

Sassen's article first appeared in 1979 in *International Migration Review*. I will be using a reprint of the article published in *Caribbean Life in New York City* in 1987.

the United States International Development Agency. Most recent research in the United States has concurred with the finding of Ugalde, Bean, and Cárdenas (Pérez, 1981; Pessar 1982; Kritiz and Gurak 1983; Bray 1984; Grasmuck 1985; Báez Evertsz and D'Oleo Ramírez 1986; George 1991; Grasmuck and Pessar 1991; Portes and Guarnizo 1991).

Most of the early authors perceived Dominican international migration as a response to direct internal processes or push factors. Hendricks, for instance, identified economic hardship generated by productive transformations in the country-side involving mechanization and competition generated by the development of export-agribusiness. Equally important in the uprooting of peasants, however, was the "pull" factor, or "chain migration", which generated the emigration of entire families from Sabana Iglesia, the rural village where Hendricks conducted his research (1974:40-70).

J. Frank Canelo cited six reasons behind Dominican exodus. For him, of paramount importance was (1) "the failure of the agrarian reform which did not provide peasants with the necessary facilities for production, and

therefore, for their subsistence" (1982:49). (Author's translation). Similarly, the author added that people left (2) because of political motives, particularly those who had participated in the 1965 revolution and who were fearful of government persecution. They also left because of (3) limited educational resources, (4) the application of old administrative methods in the national economy which affected the development of institutions and the specialization of the working class, (5) the wrong investment policies incapable of creating enough jobs to resolve the serious unemployment problem, and (6) the low salaries (ibid:49-50).

González, focusing on factors specifically affecting peasants, offered a clear detailed explanation of why they became international migrants. To her, it seemed clear that peasants were pushed out of the rural areas into an international migratory process. Dominican migrants were surplus labor produced in the country-side. They had a better possibility of finding a job and enhancing their social condition in a large metropolitan city such as New York, rather than in a small one (1970:155). González

believed that the progressive division of land into *minifundios* among inheritors and its intensive use without modern inputs negatively affected agricultural production in the country-side. Also, González noted that some other areas were subjected to intensive and indiscriminate deforestation and lost their agricultural potential (ibid:157).

Sociologist Saskia Sassen did not offer details of why Dominican peasants in particular became international migrants. She noted that "The influx of Dominicans... rose in the early 1960s because of political push factors, including Trujillo's murder and later Juan Bosch's revolution in the Dominican Republic." These Dominicans were classified by Sassen as members of the middle class (1987:280). Rural and working class Dominicans came in the late 1960s when the increasing "flow began to include many more persons of lower class origin", leading the author to conclude that "A large share of the migrants are peasant and agricultural laborers who formerly would have entered the internal rural-to-urban migration flow but now simply jump that stage" (p.180;181).

Scholars publishing after 1979 often combine internal and external factors to explain why Dominicans became international migrants. Chiefly, they have advanced two explanations. The first explanation has to do with political factors in both the sending and the receiving societies. Many argued that after the 1965, the U.S. military invasion and the subsequent establishment of a U.S.- sponsored government in the Dominican Republic, both nations encouraged migration from the Dominican Republic as a safety valve to expel political dissenters and prevent social revolts (Baez Evertsz and D'Oleo Ramirez 1986:19; Bray 1987:158; Pessar and Grasmuck 1991:31; Portes and Guarnizo 1991:32; Mitchell 1992:90; 108-9). The second explanation alludes to economic factors including the failure of the development policies implemented in the Dominican Republic after 1966, to political upheaval related to economic crisis, salary differences, and to the austerity measures promoted by the International Monetary Fund (Grasmuck and Pessar 1991:34-46; Baez Evertsz and Ramirez D'Oleo 1986:18;20; Bray 1987:156-9).

It should be noted that besides the causes discussed

above, some authors also link the continued movement of people to the development of Dominican settlements in the receiving society. In this sense, a chain migration based on family or friendship ties becomes a pull factor in the uprooting of people. Thus, Dominicans already residing in the receiving society constitute a direct vehicle for emigration for those who are home and want to leave (Gonzalez 1970; Hendricks 1974; Sassen 1979; Garrison and Weiss 1987; Portes and Guarnizo 1991). Garrison and Weiss's study shows, for instance, how a paternal aunt who had become a U.S. citizen during the 1940s initiated a migratory process which led to the uprooting of a good number of the Dominguez Family, including the aunt's brother and his wife, some of their adult children, their grandchildren, as well as other non-blood relatives who became part of the family through arranged marriage (1987:246-7).

Alejandro Portes and Luis Guarnizo believe that a chain movement does not only continue a process of migration but it could also become an independent leading cause behind a migratory process. In explaining the

causes behind Dominican migration the two authors contend that irrespective of the political forces that may have originally activated the movement, the exodus has continued because once a migratory movement begins, it tends to move in *cadena*, becoming thenceforward a self-feeding process (1991:32).

**The Middle Class and the Urban Background:
Deconstruction of a False Identity**

Thus far, the findings revealed by Ugalde, Bean, and Cardenas in 1979 regarding the class origins of Dominicans in the United States have dominated the debate. No other alternative postulate concerning Dominican migrant socio-economic background has been articulated. A concrete implication derived from the wide acceptance of the 1979 model is that U.S. Dominican migrants have come to be portrayed as a monolithic group endowed with high human capital qualities who move in search of improving their incomes and who do not represent surplus labor in the sending society. A second implication is that international migration from the Dominican Republic is a

self-selective process, monopolized by one group who seems to be the only one that is somehow adversely affected in the native land and has decided to take charge and change their destiny.

It is interesting to note that the monolithic perception has remained even when researchers have encountered signs that would seem to contradict the widely accepted 1979 model. As we will show later, the tendency has been either to ignore the contradictory signs or to present vague explanations that are inconsistent with the reality of their findings. But how accurate are the post-1979 researchers in describing the socio-economic background of U.S. Dominican migrants? Are U.S. Dominicans an urban middle class monolithic group, or are they a diverse contingent representing different class sectors, geographical regions, and abilities and skills?

In a comparative study conducted among urban Dominicans residing in New York City and Santiago in the Dominican Republic, Grasmuck found that "The New York data reveal that Dominican labor exports draw from a predominantly young, male, educated population" (Grasmuck

1985:158). The New York sample was better educated than "the population of the capital of the Dominican Republic [Santo Domingo], known for higher than average educational levels compared to the country as a whole" (p.159). Their median level of education was 8 years. The author also found that "The overwhelming majority, or 69.8 percent, of the migrants reported that they had ... been working prior to departure" (p.159), leading the author to conclude that her "results contradict the impression that Dominican emigrants, especially illegal ones, are predominantly unskilled, unemployed workers" (p.162). But the author also found that over 30% of her New York sample, in spite of their presumably superior human capital stock, reported being unemployed prior to migration to the United States (p.159).

Her study acknowledges that the rate of unemployment reported in her New York sample exceeded the rate reported in the city of Santo Domingo and Santiago, 19.3% and 18.5% respectively, during the same period. Such high rates of unemployment prior to migration leads Grasmuck to observe that Dominican migrants in the United States represented

an "apparent surplus" in the Dominican Republic since "they constitute the type of 'human capital' necessary to any meaningful type of expanded industrialization" (p.169).

Yet, a reader who is less committed to the model in question will find in Grasmuck's study that the fact that such a high percentage of Dominicans had been unemployed prior to migration had to represent more than just an "apparent labor surplus", or a group of workers who could be incorporated into the process of production at some point during industrial expansion, as is the case of necessary surplus. Quite the contrary, statistics concerning unemployment in the Dominican Republic indicate that unemployment has been consistently high during the 1970s and '80s, reflecting a structural problem rather than a situation resulting from productive problems faced by a particular job market and/or general economic slow-downs. In effect, as **Table 2** indicates, unemployment has remained high regardless of economic expansion, or economic boom, as reflected during the 1970-76 period, years of high economic growth and economic expansion.

A methodological problem we found with Grasmuck's findings regarding New York Dominican educational stock is

that her analysis was based, first, on the comparison of two sets of data that cover two distinct universes. While the New York survey, consisting of a snowball sample, was interested in drawing information about working Dominicans "who were employed at the time of the survey in New York City" (p.151), the Santo Domingo information was extracted from a probability sample, surveyed by Oficina Nacional de Planificación, with a diverse universe, including 10-year-old minors. If a valid comparison was to be drawn from both regions, then, the age variable needed to be controlled and the selection of New York Dominicans needed to be at least less specific.

In a study published in 1986 Roger Waldinger compared Dominican and Chinese owners in the garment industry and found that Chinese owners were more successful than Dominicans since Chinese firms were larger, older, and more productive (1986:168). He argued that the Chinese were more successful than Dominicans in the business because prior to migration the Chinese had had more exposure to a competitive economy in their country, had a higher level of education, and were generally more urban

than Dominicans (pp.178-80). In effect, Waldinger explains that among Dominicans "most of the owners interviewed were originally from the rural areas in the northern part of the Dominican Republic. On average, they received 9.9 years of schooling; 12 of the 32 owners had obtained a high school education or more. Not all the owners had worked prior to moving to the United States, but of those with work experience, most had been involved in activities of a blue-collar or trading nature. Once arrived in New York, most owners had made a livelihood as garment workers, and the movement from worker to owner was often protracted, lasting on average 14 years" (p.176).

Education, an instrument commonly associated with a middle class mentality and identified as a tool which leads to upward social mobility in society, was perceived differently by both immigrant groups in Waldinger's study. Not surprisingly, Waldinger finds that Chinese owners valued education highly and saw it as a tool for their children to move up socially. The Chinese believed that education would lead their children to find a job in a large company and have a better life in the future. The

author reports that in contrast to the Chinese, Dominicans did not mention education, or a professional career, as a vehicle that could help their children to improve the conditions of their lives in the future. For them, the prospects of a better life for their children was based on ownership or on developing one's own business (pp.173;178).

Waldinger does not challenge the 1979 middle-class model despite the clear implications of his findings. Just as Grasmuck's study, Waldinger's research suggests that Dominican migrants are predominantly unskilled and blue-collar workers who have less than a high school education and who could have been unemployed prior to migration. Waldinger's data also suggest that Dominican New Yorkers could be from either the rural or urban areas of the sending society. These findings, however, do not seem to figure in the prevalent interpretation of the socio-demographic origins of Dominican migrants. In other words, contradictory evidence does not seem to have diminished the currency of the model that portrays

Dominicans migrating to the United States as middle class and urban.

A study of Dominican migration to Puerto Rico, clearly noted that Dominicans there differ considerably from Dominicans residing in the United States. Jorge Duany concludes that "contrary to New York, Dominicans in Santurce are more likely to be rural and work in non-skilled service jobs... had blue-collar jobs prior to migration and had lower educational stock" (Duany 1990:28;33). Among those Dominicans interviewed in Santurce, 58% were engaged in blue-collar jobs prior to migration and 41% had 6 years or less of schooling (p. 37).

Ugalde, Bean, and Cárdenas' Premises: A Necessary Evaluation

Ugalde, Bean, and Cárdenas built their 1979 socio-economic model of Dominican migration based on social class stratification and urban/rural origins. For social stratification "the survey team stratified the urban areas into poor, middle and upper class areas on the basis of housing density and spatial location. For this study, we

ran internal consistency checks between this categorization and literacy, education, occupation characteristics of household, use of electricity, and presence of household appliances" (1979:238). The classification of areas as rural or urban was based on population density, and any populated center with less than 2,000 inhabitants was classified as rural (ibid). Based on the study of these variables, Ugalde, Bean, and Cárdenas concluded that "Dominicans in the U.S. are literate, relatively well educated, largely from middle class backgrounds, [and] urbanites" (p.244).

The authors, basing their classification of rural/urban areas on a demographic variable, that is, population size, failed to provide a rationalization for using a numerical designation not used previously in the Dominican Republic by census demographers or independent researchers.³ Similarly there is no explanation of why

³. From 1920 to 1981, census demographers in the Dominican Republic have consistently used a geopolitical definition to classify rural/urban centers. According to the census, an urban center is the head of a municipium. This definition is also used in other countries, particularly in Central América. In *Población, Migraciones Internas y Desarrollo en la República Dominicana 1950-1981*, Maritza Castillo et al

other variables such as occupation and/or the provision of services, which are frequently used in standard definitions of rural/urban, were not introduced. The use of one single variable and the reduced size of the population unit used (2,000) in the formulation may have led, I think, to the creation of a disproportionate number of urban centers in the Dominican Republic, a country which in 1970 already had over 4,000,000 inhabitants. In the formula devised by Ugalde, Bean, and Cárdenas even remote places that lacked some of the facilities associated with an urban life, such as running water, a sewer system, electricity, and whose population lived on agricultural production, may have been considered urban if they met the required 2,000 inhabitants. Similarly, the authors reported that 61% of migrants coming to the U.S. or Puerto Rico belonged to the middle class. Yet, in identifying the class strata of Dominican migrants,

emphasize the use of the definition adopted by the United Nations (population centers of 20,000 or more inhabitants) and which is commonly used in many Latin American countries. This book also provides an excellent review of the different definitions used in the Dominican Republic and other countries in Latin America.

individual or household income, which is an standard unit of measurement in social stratification, was not considered in the study as one of the variables.

A careful examination of the occupational distribution of Dominican migrants in the study reveals that the researchers' own findings on occupation do not support their thesis about the middle class status of Dominican migrants. Their own "occupations" table reveals that an overwhelming majority of Dominicans held other than middle class jobs. In effect, while only 10% of Dominican migrants held professional, managerial, technical, and kindred jobs, 23% held blue collar jobs in areas such as industrial operations and construction, 19% held service jobs, including private household service, 10% worked in sales and clerical positions, and 7% worked in transportation (p. 242). If occupation was used to indicate the social strata of Dominican migrants, then, it is obvious that their occupational distribution does not reflect the migration of a middle class group, but rather the migration of a more diverse group, dominated

predominantly by blue collar, unskilled working class people.

It is important to note that the authors did not include a definition of middle class occupations. Nor did they specify what percentage of Dominicans held middle class occupations. Yet, the large percentage of Dominicans identified in the study as holding white collar jobs prior to migration, and the conclusive classification of Dominican migrants as predominantly from middle class strata, lead us to the understanding that white collar jobs were simply considered middle class occupations by the authors.

The understanding among some researchers of social stratification of white collar jobs as strict representation of middle class occupations, particularly after C. Wright Mills' popular publication on the subject, has been modified as a direct result of the terciarization of the economy, the rise of service jobs, and a downgrading tendency among the occupations. It is believed that the productive transformation has generated a pervasive tendency, prevalent in capitalist societies, of

increasing polarization, deskilling, reduction of rewards, and lack of prestige in the new occupational structure. Among sales workers, for instance, there are some workers who are at the top of the hierarchy. In Mills' own words, they are the "Prima Donnas," that is, the specialists, prestigious executives, and more importantly, well-paid sales workers. At the bottom exist those unskilled sales workers who work at the counter in single department-stores, whose jobs are considered undesirable, and more importantly, are poorly paid. Regardless of which theoretical approach one uses to explain the social position of these workers, it is clear that their class cannot be determined, purely and strictly, by the white-collar occupation they all share. One has to look, rather at the particular position each of these workers has in the occupational hierarchy.

The Dominican Republic is no exception in this regard. Besides professional sales, who require special training, and the single-store-counter sales female worker, who hardly knows how to write or read, there are also individual, illiterate, independent workers, whether

in the formal or informal economy, who peddle goods through the streets, and who, by all accounts, when it comes to naming their occupation, are classified as sales people. The undertaking of an analysis of their occupation, as an indication of their social class would require, we think, the proper distinction of the different types of workers, and the subdivisions identified with the occupations they hold, including the different levels in the social hierarchy of the occupation. Otherwise one may end up with the classification of groups within given social strata which are not indicative nor representative of the social reality of the groups in question.

In discussing the occupations of Dominican migrants Ugalde, Bean, and Cárdenas compared the findings of the Diagnos survey with the occupations listed by INS for Dominicans in the *1975 Annual Report*. The authors stressed the similarities in occupations between the two sets of data. Commenting on the INS data, they conclude that "It is difficult to visualize poor, ignorant peasants arriving in the U.S. and rapidly moving into the occupational categories given in Table 3" (p.243). Here,

of course, the authors are alluding to the nature of the occupations listed by INS presumably held by Dominicans in the U.S., and representative of middle class occupations. The problem with this statement, again, is that not only is the number of blue-collar occupations considerably high (or 39% for operatives, craftsmen, and construction workers; 18% for service workers including private households; 11% for farm laborers; 6% for transport equipment operatives; 5% for laborers, for instance), but it shows a fundamental misinterpretation of the INS data. The 1975 INS data do not reflect the occupations Dominican migrants had in the U.S. in that year as the authors imply. These data reflect only the occupations Dominicans had in their country before migrating to the U.S.

There are also the inconsistencies between the Diagnos study and INS data concerning the occupational backgrounds of most Dominican migrants coming to the United States. While the Diagnos survey found that Dominican international migration was predominantly a middle class phenomenon, the INS annual reports indicate that throughout the 1970s and the 1980s the vast majority

of Dominicans admitted to the U.S. did not report holding jobs associated with the middle class. According to INS data, most Dominicans admitted to the U.S. were predominantly manual and blue-collar workers, including domestic servants. In 1970 only 6.6% of Dominicans admitted to the U.S. reported being professional, technical, and kindred workers and 24.5% of them reported being operatives. In 1972 only 8% of Dominicans admitted held occupations as professional, technical, and kindred workers, but 29% of them were classified as operative workers. In 1977, the pattern continued, showing a 6% of Dominicans admitted as professional, technical, and kindred workers, and a 19.9% of them admitted as operative workers (INS Annual Reports 1970; 1972;1977).⁴ **Table 1** indicates that during the 1980s the number of Dominican

4.

Entitled *Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service* after 1978. It should be clarified that throughout the years the number and titles of the occupations listed by INS have been modified a number of times. While 11 occupations were listed in 1970, 12 were listed after 1974, and just 8 after 1978. Also, up to 1974, proprietors were identified as an occupation and was lumped together with managers and officers. For accuracy, we compared occupations which could be clearly identified as middle or working class.

males classified as operators, fabricators, and laborers is 4.5 times higher than the number admitted as professional, specialist, and technician.

In analyzing the homes of Dominican migrants as an indication of their class status, the authors conclude that "the physical characteristics of the homes from which they come are considerably superior to those of the rest of the population. Even rural migrants tend to be better off than the rest of the rural population" (p.243). In the study the comparison of migrant and non-migrant homes showed that migrants' homes were larger, with 4 rooms, TV, radio, as well as other electrical goods, in-house water pipes, separate room for kitchen, and toilet with running water. Yet, what the researchers failed to identify was whether or not the social conditions found in migrants' homes, including the construction of the homes themselves, were the result of the migratory process, either via remittances or return migration. Some studies document that for many Dominican migrants, the idea of improving or buying a home in their native land is of paramount importance in their decision to emigrate. They

Table 1
Percent Distribution of Dominican Male and Female
Immigrants 16 to 64 Years Old with an Occupation
New York City 1982-1989

	Male	Female
Total with an Occupation	23,699	16,604
Professional, Specialty, & Technical	8.0	7.0
Executive, Admin., & Managerial	6.8	2.3
Sales	5.3	2.9
Admin. Support	6.2	10.3
Precision, Prod., Craft, & Repair	18.3	15.8
Operator, Fabricator, & Laborer	36.6	12.9
Farming, Forestry, & Fishing	8.4	0.2
Service	10.3	48.6

Source: Department of City Planning 1992: 83; 86.

show also that migrant homes, in contrast to non-migrant homes, are frequently equipped with electrical and modern consumer goods imported from abroad.

In the ethnographic study of Santiago mentioned previously, Grasmuck notes that "the dream of many Dominicans when they leave for the U.S. is to work for a temporary period in order to earn enough money to buy a new home in the Dominican Republic and perhaps to start a small business upon returning" (1985:167). She points out that several construction firms have developed in the Dominican Republic, including in the town of Santiago, to satisfy the housing demand of "Dominican-Yorkers". In contrasting migrant and non-migrant families Grasmuck adds that "remittances combined with the possibility of gifts from relatives living abroad mean dramatically different possibilities for obtaining consumer goods for migrant and non-migrant families" (p.156). She further notes that heads of migrant households had higher income and were more likely to have a lifestyle associated with consumer goods, including color TV, stereo, refrigerator, and the like.

In a field study focusing on women who had emigrated in yola (yawl) conducted in 1993 in the Dominican Republic by this author and Nancy López, we found that besides finding a job, the idea of owning or fixing up a home was a strong reason behind the decision to leave. We were further told that the physical conditions of the homes of some of the migrant women had considerably improved after migration, and that others had managed to buy a house or a piece of land to build one eventually. We noted that these migrants either fixed or built their houses in stages, taking several years to complete the project, and that its completion depended on a number of factors ranging from the size of the home, the material used, the kind of roofing and floor desired, the facilities involved (inside kitchen, toilet, water-pipe, and the like), and more importantly, the amount of time it took to put together the required capital. Similarly, we noted that homes where there was at least a migrant woman, were equipped with a gas range, refrigerator, and electrical goods, normally a TV, radio, radio/clock, fan, and the like (Hernández and López 1993).

From a methodological point of view, another issue which researchers who followed the 1979 socio-economic model and who embarked in ethnographic research on migration in rural communities in the Dominican Republic failed to address, was the provision of a justification for selecting a universe which they knew beforehand was not representative of the subject under study. If Dominican migrants are urban, as they claim, findings extracted from studies conducted in rural communities, would more likely fail to provide material for inferences concerning the specificities which characterize the people who tend to migrate.

The Making of a Migratory Movement: An Alternative Reading

Massive migration from the Dominican Republic developed in response to the development policies implemented in the Dominican Republic after 1966. Statistics on patterns of employment and sectoral production indicate that job loss and underemployment have systematically increased or remained high due to the developmental strategies adopted since that time. The

strategies in question have not generated enough new jobs as to produce an effective balance between supply and demand in the labor market. More importantly, the economic strategies tended to produce a dichotomous social order, exhibiting an impressive economic growth on the one hand, and parallel growth of poverty and marginalization on the other. Specifically, the developmental models would produce a society of paradoxical and contradictory tendencies where increasing accumulation would imply the use of less living labor and the creation of an enlarging pool of surplus labor. At the same time, the expansion in the accumulation process would entail the regulation of surplus labor, via emigration and the imposition of low birth rates, as well as the devalorization of employed workers through low-wages and the reduction in the expenditure in social services and public institutions.

But a massive migratory movement chained primarily to one single society does not occur only through the formation and the regulation of surplus labor in the sending setting. Nor does a massive migratory movement develop based only on the wishful or rational decisions of

the migrants involved. The migration of a large human contingent is a process that involves other actors besides the migrants themselves in their willingness to emigrate and the problems of that one society. It involves, for instance, the power structures of both the sending and the receiving society, which may or may not safeguard their respective borders or may prevent or allow the migratory process. Independently of what exactly has activated the movement in question, or whether or not the societies involved have been completely aware of all its implications, it is unlikely that the mobility of people from one society to another could develop without the consent, either formal or informal, of the gatekeepers of the societies involved.

I

The United States, the Rise of Balaguer, and the Circulation of Capital and Workers

During Trujillo's regime, the Dominican Republic embarked on a development strategy based primarily on the modernization of the agricultural sector, the expansion of agricultural production, and the development of an

industrial complex. That model was promoted under the conviction that the Dominican Republic lacked enough people as to satisfy the needs of the emerging productive market, and therefore, emigration was severely restricted and child births were systematically encouraged. During Trujillo, production was organized under the assumption that Dominicans were needed as workers and consumers to advance the economic development of the country. Consequently, any unabsorbed contingent of workers at any given moment, resulting either from productive transformation, original accumulation, economic downs, and the like, was perceived as a necessary surplus and was prevented from emigrating.

During Trujillo's regime, the increases in agricultural production for both the internal and the external market, particularly during the first decade of his government, were the result of a well structured and systematic agrarian policy which favored the expansion of the *minifundios*, the *latifundios*, as well as the creation of *tierras comuneras*. Agrarian production, with the exception of sugar cane, rested mostly on the shoulders of

Dominican peasants many of whom had already lost their lands under the regime or during the North American occupation of 1916, and had been forced into a process of proletarianization (Cassá 1982:118-31).

Similarly, the industrial production which developed in the urban centers, particularly in the city of Santo Domingo, depended on an available and mobile labor force. In *The Dominican Republic: A National History* Moya Pons states that "The industrialization that began during World War II and continued without interruption until 1960 altered the purely administrative character of Santo Domingo, converting it into a manufacturing center that attracted tens of thousands of Dominicans from the country and cities of the interior in search for jobs...Lured by the hope of finding work in one of the new industries being built, they began to form an ample urban labor market that would supply Dominican industries with a cheap labor force in the years to come" (1995:376). Thus, the number of workers, for instance, employed in the manufacturing industry, excluding sugar, increased from

12,937 in 1950, to 18,787 in 1957, and to 24,021 in 1962 (Moya Pons 1992:378).

But if the expansion of agricultural production and the development of the industrial sector, both labor intensive productions, required an abundance of available and mobile laborers, so did the expanded bureaucracy, the construction sector, the increased army, and the new social services. While employment in the public sector increased from 40,476 in 1950 to 110,349 in 1962, total employment increased from 87,747, to 195,887 during the same years (Moya Pons 1992:378).

While Trujillo's economic strategy depended on the development of an integrated sectoral production and on intensive use of labor, President Joaquín Balaguer, his successor, implemented a strategy focused on the expansion of the industrial and commercial sectors, the intensified capital investment, the terciarization of the economy, and the heavy use of foreign capital. These elements would alter the internal balance of Dominican society, giving rise to the formation of the socio-economic conditions which led to the increasing mobility of people.

II

After Trujillo's death, Juan Bosch was elected President of the Dominican Republic in December 20 of 1962 with over 60% of the popular vote. However, on September 25 1963, after being in office for approximately 7 months, Bosch's government came to an end through a military coup d'état. Collaborating in the overthrow were various forces of the Dominican elite, including merchants, the Catholic church, landowners, and industrialists, who did not support Bosch's candidacy, claiming that Bosch was a communist. "Bosch was replaced by a triumvirate composed of corporate executives and lawyers, and whose cabinet was made up of rightist entrepreneurs and lawyers with ties to the Dominican business community" (Moya Pons 1995:383).

After the coup d'état, the triumvirate remained in power supported by the church, members of the military, and the United States. With Trujillo's death the United States increased its role in Dominican politics through President Kennedy's Alliance for Progress program, an economic aid and investment package aimed at establishing in the Latin American region governments that favored U.S.

democratic policy. It is important to note that the U.S. continued its direct interference into the country's political affairs until Joaquín Balaguer, a man whose politics the White House supported, became President of the Dominican Republic.

The imposed triumvirate, largely unpopular, was the target of constant civil unrest and demonstrations of social discontent, ending in a civil war headed by a number of groups, including those demanding the return of constitutionally elected President Juan Bosch. But what had began as an internal problem among Dominicans turned into an international affair when U.S. military troops invaded the Dominican Republic on April 28 of 1965. "In order to stop Bosch from returning to power and 'to prevent the emergence of a second Cuba in Latin America,' U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson ordered 42,000 U.S. soldiers to the Dominican Republic, under the pretext of saving lives and protecting U.S. interests in the country" (Moya Pons 1995:388). The military occupation would provide the grounds for the transference of influence,

decisions, ideas, resources, and the like, from the U.S. to the occupied society.

On September 3, 1965, after an intense struggle between the Constitutionalist forces and the allied forces made up by the Dominican army and the U.S. marines, the civil war ended with a signed peace treaty and the establishment of a provisional government under the watchfulness of representatives of the Organization of the American States and the U.S.. Elections were scheduled for June of 1966 and until then the U.S. marines remained in the country, and "the United States managed to reconstitute the Dominican military as a force directly under their command and entirely dependent on the U.S. government for the payment of salaries and the provision of clothing, food, munitions, and equipment" (Moya Pons 1995:390). As previously suggested, Joaquín Balaguer would win these elections.

III

From 1966 to 1978 the Dominican Republic, under the direction of President Joaquín Balaguer, embarked on a

development project that privileged the expansion of the industrial and commercial sectors. The strategy would depend on a heavy influx of foreign capital and the promulgation of a number of economic policies favoring industrial and commercial expansion. Sociologist Wilfredo Lozano argues that government-led accumulation during the 1966-78 period was connected to Trujillo's death, who left an incipient native bourgeoisie that, without Trujillo's tutelage, was incapable of taking a leading role to facilitate capitalist accumulation in the country (Lozano 1985:13).

It was precisely this incapacity on the part of the nascent native bourgeoisie, and their commitment to further capitalist accumulation in the country, which created the necessary conditions to facilitate foreign capitalist accumulation in the Dominican Republic. But also important was the need felt in the most advanced capitalist centers of the world to incorporate new lands for production, new workers, and new consumers, to escape economic slow downs and unionization, and most of all, to cope with international capitalist competition, resulting

from the end of World War II and the strengthening of some new countries which became new players in the capitalist game. It was a restructuring process in which both capital and workers would be constantly mobilized. It is the combination and the interplay of these factors, external and internal, which, in the end, would create the conditions in the Dominican Republic for a massive international migratory movement directed particularly towards the United States.

President Joaquín Balaguer took office on June 1 1966 and by April 23 1968, his government had already approved a new investment law, Law No. 299 of Industrial and Incentives Protection, which henceforward served as the basis for capitalist accumulation in the country. The approval of the new law took intense negotiations among the different factions of the Dominican bourgeoisie. The government had clearly demonstrated its commitment in facilitating the accumulation of the private sector. Yet, Dominican capitalists were interested in assuring that, in spite of the entrance into the scenario of foreign capitalists whom they saw as a necessary and inevitable,

they would have control of specific areas of production (Moya Pons 1992:140-64).⁵

After intense negotiations, the new industrial law was finally approved. Law 299 offered a number of incentives which facilitated industrial expansion, ranging from the removal or the reduction of tariffs, to the provision of infrastructure for the development of industrial complexes. The new law also tried to prevent direct competition among foreign and national capitalists by channeling foreign investments to new areas of production which native capitalists could not develop. The promulgation of this law institutionalized, we think, a tripartite model of accumulation in the country constituted by the government, the private sector, and international capital. Each one depended and leaned on the other to sustain the new established social order. This

5.

For a detailed explanation of the elaboration of law 299, its implications for the different factions of the Dominican bourgeoisie, the role of the U.S. in its elaboration, and particularly the position of the State, consult Frank Moya Pons, *Empresarios en Conflictos: Política de Industrialización y Sustitución de Importaciones en la República Dominicana* (Santo Domingo: Fondo para el Avance de las Ciencias Sociales, 1992).

collaboration would be fundamental for the development of a migratory movement to the United States.

IV

The Politics of Stability: Family Planning and Emigration

Balaguer's political consolidation and control of the country was required if the economic plan was to succeed. Consolidation involved a pacification of the country through political repression, killings, and incarcerations. The pacification also included opening the doors to expel undesirable voices that attacked the regime, and who represented an immediate threat to the new social order. Through an unwritten and undeclared agreement between both the U.S. and the Dominican governments, political dissidents were granted visas and were directly dispatched to the United States. But the magnitude of the exodus experienced by Dominican society after 1966 suggests that the opening was used not only to eliminate unwanted political dissidents, but also other Dominicans, perhaps those whom the system had no use for.

The opening of the door for Dominicans to leave did not need an official promulgation from the government. It simply became a tacit agreement among the players. Dominicans would apply for a passport and the government would simply grant it. Contrary to Trujillo's time, now virtually any one who wanted a passport could have it. Commenting on this, Frank Canelo points out that while in 1959, 19,631 people applied for a passport and only 1,805 got one, in 1969, every petition out of the 63,595 that applied received approval (1982:42). The granting of passports concretized the opening of the door and, through the opening of the door, emigration was tacitly encouraged on the part of the ruling structure in the Dominican Republic.

The encouragement of emigration as a way of providing social and physical space to a society engaged in the restructuring of its social order was not new. During the 1950s, for instance, Puerto Rico witnessed the emigration of thousands of people who left a society undergoing an industrialization and modernization process. Scholars agreed that by the early 1960s Puerto Rico enjoyed high

economic growth through an impressive industrial complex based on investments from the United States. Yet, in *Labor Migration Under Capitalism: The Puerto Rican Experience* (1979), Puerto Rican scholars concluded that "without emigration, the effects of that accomplishment on living standards would have been negligible. Between 1948 and 1965 Puerto Rico saw the 'unusual spectacle of a booming economy with a shrinking labor force and ...shrinking employment'. This seemingly paradoxical situation was made possible because migration reduced the labor force, while productivity gains were sought through an increased capital-labor ratio...Estimates of the population siphoned off between 1950 and 1965 run from 900,000 to one million, including the children born abroad to migrants" (History Task Force 1979:127-8).

Although the Dominican government did not stipulate or even suggest that the emigration of people was needed to reduce population pressure, it is now clear that at the time the size of the population was a matter of concern. If the mobilization of people, unofficially encouraged, was managed in such a way that any one could simply

believe that migration was the result of an individual decision rather than the result of an intended and decided political strategy on the part of the Dominican power structure, this was not the case for population control. A drastic control of population growth was firmly and clearly imposed by the Dominican State. Shortly after Balaguer took office in 1966, a National Family Planning Program was instituted. The program was integrated by the Asociación Dominicana Pro-Bienestar de la Familia (PROFAMILIA), a U.S. agency established in 1966 and financed by the American International Development Agency, and by the Consejo Nacional de Población y Familia, an official government agency created in 1968 to complement the efforts of PROFAMILIA.

The implementation of family planning (FP) in the Dominican Republic has been intense. While in 1968 there were only 8 clinics offering FP, by 1985, this number had increased to 493, not counting community posts dispensing contraceptives or the services offered in private clinics under special agreement. Similarly, the number of women covered by FP increased considerably between 1975 and

1986. Among women between 15 and 49 years of age, the proportion of FP users increased from 20% to 31% from 1975 to 1986, and among women who were living with a man (married or not married), the proportion of users increased from 32% to 50% during the same years (Ramírez 1991:31;34).

It is interesting to note that while a number of birth control methods are currently used in the country, from contraceptives pills, the IUD (a method no longer in use in the United States due to its association with cancer of the uterus) to Norplan (a new contraceptive used in the form of a long-acting injection and approved in the U.S. in 1994), permanent sterilization has increasingly become the most popular method used by women in the Dominican Republic.⁶ In effect, while the use of

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Currently, a group of women are carrying out a legal case against Norplan in the state of Texas, alleging that the contraceptive has targeted minority women, that it is unsafe and that it has caused them severe physical damage. It should be noted that 70% of the women associated with this case are minority, particularly Hispanic. Similarly, it was recently reported in a Spanish television station (channel 41) that Norplan had made the product available, free of cost, to minority women, particularly Hispanics, who are unable to pay for it.

contraceptive pills among women remained between 5 and 9% between 1975 and 1986, sterilization increased from 8 to 33% between the same years (Tactuk et al 1991:12).

Statistics indicate that the implementation of FP in the Dominican Republic has been successful. After the 1960's, the fertility rate fell sharply in the country. While in 1960, for instance, the average fertility among Dominican women was 7 children, in the 1985-90 period, this number had been reduced to 3.7, (**See Graph 2**), placing the Dominican Republic among the four countries with the lowest fertility rates in Latin America. Between 2025 and 2030, the Dominican Republic is expected to reach population stability (a level of reproduction that maintains population at a stable state). The sharp decline in fertility among women has caused population growth rate to decline from an average annual growth rate of 3.5% in the 70s, to 2.3% in the 1980s, to a projected 1.6% between 1990 and 2010 (*The Economist* 1990:17;22).

The implementation of family planning in the Dominican Republic was not a conjunctural decision on the part of the U.S. Nor was it the result of an awareness

about population growth on the part of the Dominican people as Bernardo Vega has suggested (Vega 1990:260). On the contrary. FP in the Dominican Republic responded to a long-term U.S. foreign policy on population control, particularly directed to areas recipient of U.S. capital investments. In his classic book *Open Veins of Latin America*, Eduardo Galeano states that "Robert McNamara, the World Bank president who was the chairman of Ford and then Secretary of Defense, has called the population explosion the greatest obstacle to progress in Latin America; the World Bank, [McNamara] says, will give priority in its loans to countries that implement birth control plans. Lyndon B. Johnson's remark, Galeano continues, has become famous: 'Let us act on the fact that less than \$5 invested in population control is worth \$100 invested in economic growth'" (Galeano 1973:15;16). The idea was clear and simple. There were too many people in some places in the world and their reproduction patterns were for some, particularly for those who were controlling the key to economic success and progress in the capitalist world, a social matter, an international social matter, I should

say. But the message was also clear and simple. As McNamara's words suggested, participating now in the capitalist process of accumulation required, on the part of the native bourgeoisie of those countries identified with excessive population growth, the sharing of a common ideology and the willingness to allow foreigners to introduce new forms of behaviors.

FP was first approved for Puerto Rico under the idea that there was a population excess in that island. It was believed that population pressure in the island was the cause of extreme poverty and high unemployment rates, which were an obstacle to socio-economic progress. In the 1940s, on the eve of industrialization in Puerto Rico, authorities believed "that 'the pressure of population on resources which is already great, will become intolerably greater'... At the same time that massive migration was seen as the immediate solution, there was considerable skepticism that the necessary volume of outward movement could be achieved, and so education and birth control were looked to as important additional measures" (History Task Force 1979:120). In effect, the implementation of FP in

Puerto Rico was intense and by 1968, while industrial production was still booming, "35 percent of the women between twenty and forty-nine years of age had been sterilized-a proportion several times larger than the closest comparable figure for any other country" (ibid:132).

But it was not Puerto Rico alone. FP was disseminated throughout the Latin American region under the auspices of the Agency for International Development which from 1968 to 1972 had a designated operating capital of 100 million dollars. By 1986, there were 4,000 FP workers in the Dominican Republic charged with the task of disseminating a new ideology among people. People, particularly the poor and women, were told that their poverty had to do with their procreation of children, and that they needed to curtail their procreation patterns. The perception of poverty as an individual choice, rather than as a social issue, legitimized the state of inequality in the Dominican society and exonerated the state, the power structure, and the privileged social sectors from distributing and sharing society's wealth.

But, as outlined by McNamara, Dominicans, after digesting the new ideology, were now eligible for aids and loans. No longer was birth control an individual, or a woman's choice in this country. It was an imposed social policy.

It is important to emphasize that the United States encouraged FP in the Dominican Republic as a long-term policy to control population growth. It is true that by 1960 the Dominican Republic had one of the highest birth rates in the region, and that anybody who believed in the so called population explosion theory was going to be worried. But after the successful experience in Puerto Rico with FP, there should have been no doubt in the minds of U.S. representatives that population growth, either in the Dominican Republic or in any other country in the region, could be controlled through the implementation of a long-term, intense and efficient politics of birth control, and that there was no need to suggest the implementation of other methods to control it.

The collaboration of the U.S. and the Dominican government in the implementation of FP in the Dominican Republic clearly suggests that both perceived population

growth in this country as a problem and were interested in controlling it. The cooperation of the U.S. with the Dominican government in the development of the Dominican emigration, on the other hand, was the result of a conjuncture in which both agents were guided by different goals. Emigration from the Dominican Republic to the United States was encouraged by U.S. representatives as a short-term measure to eliminate an immediate problem. They saw the deportation of revolutionaries who challenged the government of Balaguer and the established new social order. The Dominican power structure, on the contrary, perceived the emigration of people, not just as a temporary strategy by which political discontent could be eliminated. Rather they saw it as a long-term policy through which dissidence as well as excess labor could be easily eliminated.

The emigration of Dominicans to the U.S. was not formally discussed with the U.S. government during Balaguer's administrations. In a long newspaper article economist Bernardo Vega, who had been the President of Banco Central from 1982 to 1984, notes that, as far as he

knew, migration to the U.S. was never included in the agenda for discussion between the U.S. and the Dominican governments (Vega 1990:161). Also, in a speech given before the American Chamber of Commerce about U.S.-Dominican relations, Vega emphasized that from 1961 to 1982 basically two issues dominated the discussions between the U.S. and the Dominican governments: the sugar quota and the amount of aid for the Dominican Republic (Vega 1990:82). Although, as noted by Vega, there was no discussion on the part of both governments on the issue of emigration, a door had conveniently opened for Dominicans to emigrate to the United States. If the United States was not interested in promoting a long-term and massive movement of Dominicans as we suggested the question remains as to how the large exodus of Dominicans to the U.S. developed. We should begin by showing how the migration process was initiated.

The accounts related by John Bartlow Martin in his book, *Overtaken by Events: The Dominican Crisis from the Fall of Trujillo to the Civil War* (1966), reveal that, as a U.S. ambassador in the Dominican Republic, he was a key

player in opening the United States to Dominican immigration. John Bartlow Martin enjoyed respect among U.S. government representatives for his knowledge about the Dominican Republic. In 1962 Martin was appointed Ambassador of the Dominican Republic by President John F. Kennedy. He was the first appointed U.S. ambassador to the country since 1960, the year when the country was sanctioned by the Organization of the American States, following Trujillo's failed attempt to assassinate the President of Venezuela.

During Ambassador Martin's first official meeting with the Consejo de Estado, a 7-member governing body, a number of issues were discussed, including violence in Santo Domingo and the granting of U.S. visas to Dominican troublemakers. In his lengthy book Martin declares that "They [the Consejo] almost took rioting for granted-and no wonder: All last Fall and Winter they had lived with rioting. Trujillo's fall had cut loose long pent-up tensions, and the streets were chaotic. President Bonnelly said that well-trained Castro/Communist agents were paying thieves and hoodlums to riot. I asked if we

could help. Reid and Bonilla Atilas immediately said yes--they wanted technical help in training the police to control riots, in setting up a secret anti-subversive unit to deal with Castro/Communists, and in arranging deportations" (Martin 1966:8).

But, according to Ambassador Martin, deportations had begun before his arrival in Santo Domingo in March 9 of 1962, and it seems that they had extended throughout his period: "By the end of the year [Martin says] we had some 125 deported in the United States, *most sent before I arrived.* ... The riots mounted. Cautiously, the Consejo began to deport agitators under the Emergency Law. The Castro/Communists denounced it in the name of freedom. So did the political parties seeking the votes of the deportee' relatives. *And we became involved--we had to issue U.S. visas for people that the Consejo deported to the United States*" (ibid:99;100) (Emphasis added).

Furthermore, Martin claims that the Consejo wanted the U.S. to make sure that Dominicans deported to the U.S. could not leave that country. When exactly they began deporting people is not totally clear in his book. What

is clear is that during Martin's time deportation took place, and that prior to his arrival, somehow without the presence of a U.S. ambassador, for Martin was the first ambassador assigned to the country after Trujillo's death, the U.S. had issued visas for "Dominican communists".

But the U.S. actions concerning the mobility of Dominicans to the U.S. did not stop with the deportations of "Castro/communists". Ambassador Martin's first trip to Washington was in April, and during his first meeting with the Secretary of State, the Ambassador discussed what he classified as "the visa mess". "The visa mess" referred to here was what Ambassador Martin perceived as an increasing number of visa applicants in the Dominican Republic. Stationed daily in front of the American Consulate were long lines of people whom he believed needed to be served. In his view, the increasing number of visa applicants had created a backlog in the outdated American Consulate and this needed to be resolved. Ambassador Martin reports in his book that "Several months later", after his visit to the State Department "we finally got what we needed--a new Consulate building at

the Fairgrounds, far from downtown Santo Domingo, three extra vice consuls, and a new consul" (Martin 1966:120).

Whether or not the creation of a new infrastructure and the increase of visa granting officers ended "the visa mess" in the Dominican Republic is not entirely clear. For one thing, the number of applicants has continued to increase over the years. The backlog in applications has also continued. Long lines continued to form, and all kinds of people, applicants or not, continue to wander around the American Consulate. We do know, however, that the number of U.S. immigrant visas granted in 1963 nearly tripled as compared with 1962 and that the number of non-immigrant visas granted during the same year also increased considerably.

In explaining the U.S. involvement in the early development of Dominican migration to the U.S., Christopher Mitchell notes that "the growth in Dominican migration in these years was one of the most rapid spurts in recent population movement from any Caribbean society. The administrative simplification and speedup initiated by the U.S. Ambassador [Martin] surely contributed

significantly to this high level of legal migration" (Mitchell 1992:100). The official actions taken by Martin to facilitate the migratory process, Mitchell argues, were motivated by the U.S. foreign policy which "sought (especially from 1961 to 1966) to limit political tensions in a nation where government instability was taken by Washington as an open door to radical revolution... It is likely that administrative actions on migration were only loosely influenced by prevailing pro-Balaguer assumptions, rather than stemming from well-pondered choices in foreign policy" (Ibib:90;106).

As Mitchell noted, the visas granted right after Trujillo's death, that is before the civil war and Balaguer's administration, responded to a sense of fear on the part of the U.S. representatives who believed that many Dominicans were at the verge of violence in the country. The understanding was that somehow the sense of freedom among Dominicans provided by the demise of Trujillo could lead this nation into chaos. Martin reports in his book that while he and Sumerford, a U.S. representative stationed in the Dominican Republic, were

walking in Santo Domingo in 1961 right after Trujillo's death, the latter referred to a number of young Dominicans who were protesting around *Parque Independencia*, and commented that "Those boys would risk anything anywhere. They could burn the city. They'd as soon go up against the troops as not. They'd tear down the statues, set fire to the homes" (Martin 1966:68).

By enforcing peace in this nation U.S. officials were really trying to prevent the establishment of a social-order which was going to deny access to U.S. capitalism in the hemisphere. Their understanding was that containment social discontent in this country was a matter of life and death for capitalism in the region. That is to say that what might seem as an isolated political action on the part of the U.S. government, that is the granting of U.S. visas to dissident Dominicans, represented, in reality, a fierce fight on the part of a social-economic system seeking to maintain its hegemony in the region by securing its source of economic power. In the end, the prompt and opportune direct intervention of the U.S. into Dominican affairs was motivated by the need to kill what could have

emerged, and to abort what could have represented, not just dissidence, but a total different point of view concerning people, production, and the distribution of wealth in society.

Whether or not U.S. fears were well founded goes beyond the scope of this study. But it is important to stress that a given action, undertaken with specific and clear intentions, evolved into a process not intended nor desired by those who took the action in the first place. The reality is that U.S. representatives gave visas to Dominican trouble-makers who could contest the presence of U.S. interests in the Dominican Republic. But the granting of visas would give way to the establishment of an appropriate infrastructure and logistic that would later facilitate the massive mobility of people from one society to another. From a sociological point of view, one can argue that at that time the manifest intention behind the U.S. in granting visas was simple and clear: to eliminate political opposition. But this act would directly provoke a latent consequence, or the exodus of thousands of Dominicans to the United States. The complexity of the

matter shines forth when we regard the U.S. as a troubled society where millions of people, particularly Blacks and Puerto Ricans, demanded increased acceptance and participation.

V

Economic Growth and Surplus Population

During Balaguer's first two periods, 1966-74), the Dominican Republic witnessed an impressive economic growth. Economist Miguel Ceara Hatton has characterized that growth as an "accelerated growth", reflecting a GNP annual growth rate of 12.2% in 1969 and a 12.9% in 1973. During the 1969-73 period, the manufacturing sector grew at an annual rate of 14.7%, construction, at 20.1%, and agriculture at 8.0% (Ceara Hatton 1990a:64-5). Overall, between 1970 and 1974, industrial employment grew at an annual rate of 5.9% (ibid:70). Most economists agreed that the economic boom during Balaguer's first two periods was the result of three interconnected variables: foreign investments, foreign aid, and the high prices received for Dominican products, particularly sugar, in the

international market (Ceara Hatton 1990a; Calvo and Dilla 1986;). In terms of foreign capital penetration during this period Moya Pons concludes that "The amount of money the United States poured into the Dominican Republic between 1966 and 1973 was enormous in proportion to the small size of the country's economy" (Moya Pons 1995:397). Foreign aid, for instance, via state loans, grants, or food supplies represented approximately \$122 million between 1965 and 1966, \$133 million between 1967 and 1969 and \$78 million per year between 1969 and 1973 (Moya Pons: *ibid*). Direct foreign investments, on the other hand, increased from \$154 million in 1964 to \$396 in 1972, of which about 89% represented direct investment from the United States (Del Castillo et al 1974:183).

But what is still missing in the analysis is the role that State demographic control, via the institutionalization of the international mobility of people and the contraction of the natural growth of the population, played in the viability of the reorganization of production and the stabilization of the Dominican society. The Puerto Rican experience seems to indicate

that it is unlikely that a capitalist economic project based on foreign investments tending to reduce the use of labor, would have reached any level of success in the Dominican Republic, if the hundreds of thousands of men and women who were put into motion, whether formally or informally, had remained, and the birth rate had not been severely curtailed.

VI

The Road to Modernization: Import Substitution

Since 1966, seeking to modernize and develop the country as well as to compete effectively in the international market, the Dominican Republic has adopted a number of economic strategies. The first strategy adopted, Import Substitution (IS), had been initiated by Trujillo during the 1950s, and Balaguer's government, through Law 299, passed during his second year in power, formalized a new version of the economic strategy. IS was based on the premises of economist Raul Prebisch who believed that underdeveloped countries could accomplish a capitalist national development by implementing import substitution,

that is, by limiting the level of imports and by developing an industrial infrastructure for assembling or manufacture of similar goods within the country. In keeping with the ideas proposed by Prebisch, IS emphasizing industrial accumulation generated a rapid expansion of the industrial sector in the Dominican Republic. Between 1970 and 1974 industrial production grew at an annual rate of 120% (Duarte and Corten 1982). Between 1970 and 1977, the capital invested in the food industry increased from DR\$130.9 million to DR\$196.8 million, and in the intermediary industry, from RD\$31.2 million to DR\$70.5 million (Vicens 1982).

But industrial expansion and increase in production occurred within contradictory tendencies, generating an involutionary process which affected the entire process of accumulation. Industrial production depended heavily on the importation of foreign inputs and technology as well as on State subsidies, and it failed to diversify its infrastructure. The creation of new jobs was being also affected by the increase in the use of technology and by adopting technology tending to substitute labor in the

process of production. In the end, these tendencies imposed limitations on the level of accumulation associated with the native bourgeoisie, aggravated the unemployment and underemployment problem and, ultimately, created a structurally disarticulated economy.

While in 1970 total imports of foreign inputs, excluding the sugar industries, represented 24.5%, by 1977, total industrial imports had increased to 38.8% (Vicens 1982:136). The small group of industries engaged in the manufacturing of intermediary and heavy products alone demanded up to 3/4 of foreign inputs during the same years (Ceara Hatton 1986:96). As a direct consequence, capital flight from the Dominican Republic towards the industrialized countries, particularly the U.S., increased from \$RD 78.9 million in 1970 to \$RD 388.8 million in 1977 (Vicens 1982:138).

The tendency to import foreign inputs, from technology to raw materials for industrial production, led into a lack of industrial and sectoral integration. In effect, while 85% of the manufacturing industry emphasized the production of non-durable goods which required low

levels of industrial transformation, particularly food and garments, only 12% and 3%, respectively, of the industrial capacity was dedicated to the production of intermediary and capital-related goods, particularly goods for the construction industry. Similarly, although the country had the resources to grow tobacco internally for the production of cigarettes, using the exemptions provided by Law 299, manufacturers imported tobacco to be processed in the country, contributing thereby to the lack of sectoral integration of the Dominican economy.

In a 1973 speech, President Balaguer, justifying the subsidies given by the State to private industrial development in the country, stated that "In 1972, the government granted a total of RD\$ 60,621,333.86 in exonerations to the private industrial sector. Without any doubt, this is a tremendous sacrifice on the part of the State which is badly in need of fiscal resources to invest in the country's urgently needed construction. But this is the price that we must pay to develop the country and, within a few years, be able to have an industrial development capable of not only substituting many of the

imports demanded today, but also capable of absorbing a great deal of our unemployed workers" (author's translation)⁷

But contrary to President Balaguer's predictions, IS failed these purposes miserably. It did not substitute imports, nor did it reduce unemployment levels. Imports of consumer-related manufactured products increased in almost every single industrial branch. From 1973 to 1980, imports of total manufactured products, for instance, increased from 26.8% to 31.9%. Similarly, while the importation of food, tobacco, and beverages also increased during the same years from 7.5% to 9.8%, furniture increased from 4.78% to 12.41%, clothing from 13.48% to 2.76%, shoes from 4.26% to 10.62%, and paper from 31.32% to 49.40% (Ceara Hatton 1990a:80-81).

In 1970, when unemployment data were first officially recorded in the country, the national population census reported an unemployment rate of 24.1%. **Table 2**

⁷. Speech cited by Miguel Ceara Hatton en *Tendencias estructurales y coyuntura de la economía dominicana 1968-1983* (Santo Domingo: Centro de Investigaciones Económica, INC.), 57.

Table 2
Unemployment Rates
 (% of Labor Force)

Year	(%)
1970	24.1
1973*	20.0
1978*	24.4
1979*	19.3
1980	22.2
1981	20.7
1982	21.3
1983	22.1
1984	24.2
1985	27.2
1986	28.7
1987	25.0
1988	20.8
1989	19.6
1990	19.7
1991	26.6

*Santo Domingo

Sources: for 1970-1979, Ceara Hatton 1990b: 60. For 1980-1991, Ceara Hatton and Croes Hernández 1993:18.

Indicates that since then the rate of unemployment has

remained considerably high throughout the years. Although industrial production was highly concentrated, particularly in the city of Santo Domingo, which contained over two thirds of the country's industries, by 1973, the unemployment rate in this city was 20%.

Between 1970 and 1979, 305,600 men and women in working age entered the labor force in the country. But during the same years, the total number of employed workers in the industrial sector increased from 113,040 to 139,503, an absolute increase of 26,463 jobs in a period of 9 years, an average of less than 3,000 new jobs created per year. Thus, contrary to Balaguer's views, the direct transference of resources from the State to the private sector, formally expressed through Law 299 of industrial incentives, did not significantly alter the internal structure of the industrial sector, by expanding its needs to incorporate new workers into the process of industrial production or by expanding the level of industrialization in the country.

The constant increase of technology over labor in the process of industrial production tended to affect

negatively the elasticity of the demand in the industrial sector. While in 1960, for instance, the creation of an industrial job required DR\$3,125, by 1968, the required capital had increased to DR\$5,000, and by 1981 to over DR\$9,000. Moya Pons has argued that critics of Law 299 when calculating the amount of capital required to create a new job failed to include the contributions of the State into the creation of such job. He points that "Between 1972 and 1980 only 28,049 direct jobs were created under the incentives offered by Law 299, and that the State contributed to the creation of these jobs with RD\$139.7 million of uncollected taxes... The State contributed with an average of RD\$6,582 in every new job created during this period" (Moya Pons 1992:346) (Author's translation).

Similarly, between 1968 and 1981 a total of 678 new industries were approved under Law 299. These industries, holding an investment capital of DR\$498,664, created only 54,891 new jobs, an average of 4,222 jobs per year. By 1981 industrial expansion still demanded fewer than 5,000 new workers per year at a time when the active economic

population was growing at an annual rate of 5.5% each year, generating some 56,000 men and women ready to work.

Critics of the IS model have also argued that the emphasis placed on industrial expansion did not alter significantly the level of industrialization in the country. From 1969 to 1973, for instance, the level of industrialization increased from 14.8% to 18.6% (Ceara Hatton 1990a:72). From the early 1970s, however, the level of industrialization began to decrease, undergoing a loss of little over a single percentage point between 1974 and 1984, when it decreased from 18.4% to 17.2% (Ceara Hatton 1986:132).

VII

The Cattle-Agricultural Sector

The emphasis placed on the industrial expansion and particularly had an adverse effect on the development of the agriculture-ranching sector whose contribution to the GNP, for instance, would decrease progressively.

Latifundismo as well as the intensification of capital in the agribusiness industry, affected the development of

jobs in the country-side, provoking the expulsion of laborers and their increasing mobilization to the urban centers.

In 1970 the contribution of the combined agriculture and ranching sector to the GNP represented 23.2%, with an annual growth rate of 9.8%. But this contribution began to decline progressively, shrinking from 22.1% in 1971 to 16.9% in 1981. The agricultural sector alone underwent a similar process of deterioration, from 16.1% of GNP in 1971 to 10.3% in 1981.

The agrarian sector is characterized by profound and severe contradictions reflected in the unequal distribution of land and the emphasis on producing for an export market based on the underutilization of land and workers. From 1971 to 1981 the absolute number of *latifundios* of 16,000 *tareas*⁸ or more decreased from 216 to 161, but their average size increased from 46,538 to 59,474 *tareas*, reflecting a higher concentration of arable land. By 1981 only 1.83% of landowners holding *latifundios*

⁸.

Local measurement of land. A *tarea* represents approximately one-sixth of an acre.

of 800 *tareas* or more occupied more than half of all the arable land in the country, equivalent to 55.23%.

The National Agrarian Census showed that there were 185,292 small farms in 1971, each holding between 8 and 79 *tareas*, with an average size of 29 *tareas*, occupying just 12.47% of the arable land. By 1981, however, the distribution reflected a higher fragmentation of land among small landowners. The number of farms, for instance, holding between 8 and 79 *tareas* increased from 185,292 to 252,995, but the proportion of the area occupied by these farms decreased from 12.47% to 11.71%, with the average size of the farm also declining from 29 to 20 *tareas*.⁹

Traditionally, the *latifundios* required less use of Dominican labor. Take, for instance, the activities of cattle-raising and sugarcane. Cattle-raising concentrates

⁹. For 1971 data consult Carlos Dore y Cabral, *Problemas de la estructura agraria dominicana*. (Santo Domingo: Ediciones Taller, 1982), 19-21. For 1981 data consult Frank D'Oleo, 1990 *Crisis agraria, dominación agroindustrial y descampesinización*. (Santo Domingo: Centro Dominicano de Estudios de la Educación, 1991), 31.

the largest amount of land, does not require much labor, for animals do not need much special attention. More importantly, cattle-raising is extensive, and landowners tend to use between 10 and 15 *tareas* per head of live stock. Sugarcane, on its part, represents the second largest production in the *latifundios*. But its production is seasonal and has been organized around the use of Haitian labor, neglecting the incorporation of Dominicans into the process of sugar production.

Small farms produce food for internal consumption, using approximately 29% of the available land, and producing over 40% of the food on farms consisting of less than 80 *tareas*. The small proportion of land allocated to produce for local consumption, its increasing fragmentation, the use of obsolete methods of production, and most of all, the lack of available resources for agricultural production (capital, technology, and other inputs), have created a growing shortfall in the production of food products for local consumption. This shortfall is filled by growing food imports.

Table 3

Import of Products in 1990
(In Million of RD\$)

Products	\$	Products	\$
Rice	29.2	Sunflower Oil	15.5
Beans	60.9	Cotton Oil	23.5
Milk	36.8	Soy Oil	233.5
Garlic	5.8	Potatoes	2.0
Onion	4.3	Spaghetti	3.3
Pork Meat	1.8		

Source: D'Oleo 1991:56.

By the 1970s, it was evident that the agrarian subsector faced a structural crisis reflected in its inability to satisfy the demand of the internal market. Production in the sector slowed down progressively, decreasing from an average rate of growth of 4.1% in 1966 to 1.29% in 1981, reaching negative rates of growth in 1984 and 1985 of -0.9 and -3.9% respectively (Ceara Hatton 1986:46). Imports of food for local consumption slowly replaced the need to improve internal production, contributing to the displacement of workers.

Thus, from virtual self-sufficiency in food production in the 1950s, the Dominican Republic fell into a pattern of having to import increasing amounts of basic foodstuff, including rice, fish, oil, meat, vegetables, eggs, milk, grains, and the like. Imports of food products increased from US\$43 million in 1972 to US\$230 million in the 1980/1 period (Ceara Hatton 1986:51). **Table 3** shows that in 1990 the Dominican Republic imported a total of RD\$415.4 million in basic food products, 69.9 million more than in 1989 (D'Oleo 1991:55). On the other hand, increasing importation, scarcity, and commercial speculation in the market, led to a progressive increase in the prices of food, reaching a 31% increase in the period of 1980-1984. The disparity between prices, particularly of food products, and a low salary gave way to a severe inflation contracting the real value of the peso to 0.30 in 1980. In effect, while in 1980, for instance, the monthly average cost for feeding a family of six was RD\$162.00, the minimum wage salary stood at RD\$125.00, representing a gap of RD\$37.00. By 1984, however, after a minimum wage increase from RD\$125.00 to

RD\$175.00, the gap slightly expanded when the monthly average cost for food increased to RD\$213.50, exceeding the minimum wage by RD\$38.50 per month.

Even when producers were successful in increasing the production of basic foods, such as rice, beans, tomato, onion, garlic, etc, in response to the implementation of government-led programs, particularly after 1978, prices for these products remained unreachable for most people. Domestic growers not only continued to use foreign inputs for their cultivation, but their output was not large enough to produce a significant change in the size of the supply.

Focusing on employment, the agrarian-ranching sector progressively reduced its need to use labor, undermining the creation of productive jobs in the country-side. In effect, from 1960 to 1970, for instance, the absolute number of people employed in the agricultural-ranching sector decreased from 1,118,000 to 723,000 (Ramírez et al 1982:20). By 1980, this number had decreased to 691,000 (Santana and Tatis 1985:9). (See **Figure 1**). As a direct result, unemployment in the area remained high, over 20%,

even when the economy experienced unprecedented growth. The rural unemployment rate increased from 24.2% in 1970 to 26.1% in 1980, decreased to 22.8% in 1981, and rose again to 25.5% in 1984. Underemployment increased in the rural areas from 40% in 1973 to 42% by 1980¹⁰.

VIII

Urban Centers and the Mobility of Surplus Labor

The inability of the agriculture-ranching sector to absorb the increasing working population, provoked the movement of people from the country-side to the urban centers. Between 1950 and 1980 the Dominican Republic witnessed an impressive urban growth, particularly during the 1960-70 period. From 1920 to 1950, the proportion of urban people increased from 16.6% to 23.8%. By 1981, this proportion had more than doubled, increasing to 52.0%, and by 1985 to 57.7%. In 1950, only Santo Domingo and Santiago

10.

Conventionally defined as employed full-time people earning less than the established minimum-wage, or who hold jobs that are not commensurable with their qualifications or training, or who, for involuntary reasons are partially employed without being ill or incapacitated.

had 20,000 or more people, but by 1960, 5 other towns reached that level of population. By 1970, the number of cities populated with 20,000 or more people had already increased to 15.

It is estimated that between 1960 and 1970, 389,288 people migrated from the rural areas, particularly from the Cibao region, into the urban centers. Between 1970 and 1980, the number of migrants had increased to 536,054 (Ariza Castillo et al 1991:76). It is interesting to note that after 1960, over 70% of the migrants were attracted to the Southeast, a region where industrial capital began to develop during the first governments of Balaguer. The movement of people from the country-side to the cities in pursuit of jobs indicates that rapid urbanization in the country has resulted from a landless peasantry rendered unable to reproduce itself in the country-side through a process of proletarianization.

Unfortunately, for many Dominicans the urban centers too had their own problems. Many of the urban areas were not prepared to absorb and accommodate the increasing number of people who arrived seeking employment. It was

not only the jobs that were lacking, but for many of those who managed to get jobs the pay was low and the conditions were bad. It was also the lack of an infrastructure which reflected a social change, a move to an urban center, or simply, a move to an area exhibiting some of the facilities associated with a process of urbanization. For many movers, urbanization simply implied a change in their spatial distribution, but not a transformation of their social life or their occupations. Many "urban" Dominicans lacked running and drinkable water, a sewage system, paved streets, housing facilities, schools, health care centers, and most of all, access to communication with the rest of the city where they lived. Migration led to high concentrations of people in established urban areas and contributed to the demographic expansion of such areas. But people's arrival and settlements emphasized the state of inequality existing in the urban spaces. Urbanization reflected a class society clearly marked by the housing patterns and the distribution of spaces as well as by the goods and services of the city.

Take, for instance, the case of Santo Domingo, the most populated and modern city of the country, and which attracted the most migrants. Census data indicated that in 1970, a 65% of the heads of the households in Santo Domingo were immigrants and that 89% of the nation's total migrants selected this city as their point of destination. Dominican demographers claim that this city alone absorbed 47% of the country's urban growth for the last 65 years. Similarly, by 1980 this city accounted for 73.2% of all of the country's wholesalers; had 71.8% of construction permits, 74.5% of the telephones, and 75% of the automobiles. Between 1977 and 1987, the number of registered supermarkets in Santo Domingo increased from 91 to 225, travel agencies from 165 to 404, credit cards agencies, from 3 to 21, and computer centers from 11 to 78. But this city, where between 1963 and 1982, the amount of invested capital multiplied by five, and the number of tourists increased twenty times, is also the most concrete expression of contradictions of a capitalist urban setting.

The many poor *barrios* (neighborhoods) that have developed in the city of Santo Domingo within the last 30 years have resulted from direct migration rather than from natural population increase. The majority of the people who move to the city reside in popular and marginal *barrios*¹¹. It is estimated that the population of these areas represents 81% of the city's households. Yet they occupy only 39.5% of its physical space (Cela, Duarte, Gómez 1988:21). These crowded *barrios* represent the concrete limits of modernity and urban expansion in this city. For instance, as many as 2,900 school-age children had no seats in the only existing public school in the *barrio* Los Guandules, and 26.2% of the poor people residing in *barrios* located in the North of the city had no running water in their houses, and as many as half of them have never seen a garbage pick up truck in their areas (Cela, Duarte, & Gómez 1988:8).

11. This terminology for neighborhoods in the city is based upon the level of household income. At that time, the established level of household income for a popular neighborhood ranged from DR\$301 to RD\$600 and for a marginal neighborhood, it ranged from RD\$50 to RD\$300.

In an ethnographic study conducted in 5 poor *barrios* of Santo Domingo during 1976 and 1977, sociologist Isis Duarte found that over 90% of the residents of these *barrios* were immigrants and that, as the researchers expected, over 54% of them had migrated from rural parts of the country, particularly from the Cibao region (Duarte 1980:223). This study, the largest and most detailed survey to date concerning working people in poor neighborhoods in the country, revealed that the majority of the workers had service sector jobs and that over 66% of the heads of households engaged in the labor force belonged to the relative surplus population. These workers earned between RD\$0. and less than RD\$4.00 per day at the time of the survey (Ibid:286).

The study found that open unemployment in the *barrios* represented 16.3% of the labor force, a lower rate than the official rate for the city, which stood at over 20% for almost the entire decade. They concluded, however, that in reality the rate of unemployment was much higher in the *barrios* since 10% of those who had jobs had not earned any wage during the reference week selected in the

survey, which clearly represented hidden unemployment (Ibid:295). Similarly, of those who were currently working, only 35.2% had permanent jobs. A solid 61% of them had been unemployed at some time in their last occupation, and only 20% had been able to find a second job to complement their inadequate earnings (Ibid:413).

An interesting finding in this study is that neither the number of years living in the city nor the amount of time performing the same job helped to improve the migrants' outcomes in the labor market. Although education was found to correlate strongly with the workers' stability in the labor market, its effect on earnings and occupation was less significant. The higher percentage of workers with 9 years of education or more was found among those holding jobs in Community Service (office, military, teachers, and kindred), representing 48.7%. But while an overwhelming 94.1% of these workers held permanent positions, only 62% of them earned enough to reproduce their labor power (RD\$4.00 or more per day), and the majority of them had learned their skills on the job (Ibid:287).

IX

Economic Re-articulation in Search of Accumulation

"El que paga la música, escoge el son" (who pays for the music chooses the tune). Popular saying.

By the mid 1970s the Dominican Republic had shifted from production mainly oriented to traditional products (coffee, sugar, tobacco, and cocoa) to production oriented to the development of Free Trade Zones (FTZ), tourism, and the cultivation of non-traditional agrarian products. The demand for traditional Dominican agrarian products began to fall in the international market, particularly in the U.S., as the demand for other goods began to rise. While sugar, for instance, whose production constituted the base of the Dominican economy, reduced its contribution to the GNP from an average of 25% during the last years of the 1970s to about 8% in 1990, tourism accounted for over 40% of GNP by the end of the 1980s. Although these changes began to manifest themselves clearly during the 1980s, when the contribution of these sectors to the GNP increased significantly, the reality is that the shift in

production was already in the making during Balaguer's first government through his wide-open door policy to foreign investments.

Critics have argued that capitalist accumulation via foreign investment tends to deform and subordinate the local economy to outside forces. In *Reformismo Dependiente* (1985) sociologist Wilfredo Lozano argues that foreign loans in particular presuppose a series of commitments towards the lending institutions, and that they serve as a vehicle to intensify the dependency of the Dominican Republic. He states that "These commitments do not only imply the direct payment to cover the loan, but also a number of measures related to economic development, subordinated to specific strategies designed by the international agencies, and the binding of the Dominican import market to the supply of goods produced by the lending countries" (Lozano 1985:187,9) (Author's translation). Others emphasize that foreign capital does not contribute to the diversification of the local economy since it is normally directed to target areas of

production for which an international market already exists (Del Castillo et al 1974).

As argued by Lozano, the effects of foreign investment have been felt on the supply side of the market which has increasingly become flooded with goods produced in the United States. A recent article shows, for instance, that the same U.S. products when sold in the Dominican market had much higher prices than in the U.S. market. In comparing the cost of basic supermarket products, the author establishes that the same U.S. products cost between 3 and 5 times more in the Dominican market than in the U.S. (Riley de Dauhajre 1995:1). (See **Graph 3**). It is important to emphasize that the importation of these products created a new market and new consumers which directly contributed to the expansion of both international and native capitalist accumulation. Thus, while Dominican consumers are forced to pay higher prices, the mobility of goods and the new demands associated with, contribute to the expansion of U.S. industrial capital and native capital associated with the commercial and import sectors.

Foreign investments or the relocation of capital responded to a re-organization of production in advanced capitalist societies seeking to further the process of accumulation. The re-organization involved the relocation of capital and production, or the shipping away from its original base, and particularly off-shore, of as many aspects of the process of production as possible. The basic aim behind the move was the reduction of the cost of production to further the accumulation of capital. But the relocation of production did not imply the loss of the markets these goods already had before the relocation. Quite the contrary, the relocation created new markets, but kept the old ones which were also penetrated with goods produced somewhere else in the world. During the 1980s, under the administration of President Ronald Reagan, the Agency for International Development (AID) further emphasized the relocation of capital and production outside the boundaries of the U.S. AID was charged with the mission of producing projects that would encourage U.S. investments outside the U.S. The agency's bilateral loans were targeted to countries which strongly

encouraged the development of private projects dealing with the production of light manufacturing and in agriculture, the production of non-traditional products.

While the move of U.S. capitalists was financially supported through the agency's Overseas Private Investment Corporation, in 1981, AID created the Bureau of Private Enterprise to sponsor the creation of partnerships between U.S. and native capitalists in projects related to the agribusiness industry. In his Letter of Intention to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), signed in 1982 by President Salvador Jorge Blanco, it was agreed that part of the US\$466.5 million lent by the IMF to the Dominican Republic was going to be used in economic activities capable of increasing the level of investments in the country, from 19.5% in 1982 to 22.5% in 1985. The imposition of international capitalism over the internal productive structure of the Dominican Republic is clearly perceived when one notes that after 1982 the economic activities encouraged by the government in the private sector were precisely those connected to foreign capitalists, including collaborative projects between

native and foreign capital, such as manufacture, agribusiness, and tourism (Ceara Hatton 1990a:160).

The development of FTZ during the 1970s, and the cultivation of non-traditional agricultural products through the agribusiness industry during the 1980s in the Dominican Republic are productive modalities that responded directly to this new pattern of accumulation. Both modalities are interconnected to the relocation of capital and production and the entrance of foreign capital into the country after 1966. Some have read these as a strategy whereby smart Dominican capitalists who, affected by protectionist barriers, lost their niche in the international market and sought new ways to accumulate. But it would seem, rather, that for the Dominican bourgeoisie, the shift reflected the true nature of a dependent capitalist accumulation process, that is, their subordinated position in the capitalist order. The shift in production was orchestrated by people like "Mr. Dole", an American businessman, who was convinced that he could no longer compete effectively in the world market and wanted to relocate his pineapple production away from

Hawaii. Specifically, "Mr. Dole" believed that the loss of his competitiveness, (lower profit, that is), had to do with his workers, the pickers, who by 1990, after 69 long years of picking up pineapple in Hawaii were earning as much as \$8.23 an hour, while his competitors were paying much less to workers in Thailand and the Philippines. The move for "Mr. Dole" was simply imperative.

Since 1969, attracted mainly by the high number of unemployed people, the low wages, and most of all, by the fiscal incentives provided by the government, including high tax exemptions and a favorable monetary exchange rate, foreign capitalists began to invest in the first FTZ in the Dominican Republic. The first FTZ, with just one industry in operation, opened in the Eastern part of the country, in a town called La Romana, but by 1988 there were 16 FTZ's distributed throughout the entire country, with 224 industrial installations. The number of direct jobs created had increased from 504 to 85,000.

The establishment of industries in the FTZ really intensified during the 1980s, particularly after 1985, when the number of new factories jumped from 71 to 136,

and the number of direct jobs increased from 16,440 to 30,902. By 1993, there were 462 industrial plants and 164,296 direct jobs operating in 30 FTZ in the country (See **Table 4**). By 1988, after México, the Dominican Republic had the largest number of industrial installations in FTZs in the Latin American and Caribbean region (Abreu et al 1989:68). But critics agreed that although FTZs have generated jobs and revenues, both badly needed, they have not contributed significantly to the industrial development of the country nor alleviated its unemployment problem.

From a macro-economic point of view, critics question the contribution of the FTZs to the development and expansion of industrial production in the country. They believe that FTZs have emphasized the disconnection between sectorial production by continuing to import most of its industrial inputs, and by having industries that are engaged in the final stage of the production process, eliminating the need to develop transformative industries. In other words, these are not industries that help to industrialize the country. They also find that FTZs

operate as economic enclaves, whose only connection with the country's economy is the wages paid to workers and the revenues generated for the use of the infrastructure (Ceara Hatton 1986; 1990b; Duarte 1986).

Table 4
Evolution of FTZ in the Dominican Republic

Year	1975	1980	1985	1990	1993
# of FTZ	3	3	8	25	30
Industries	29	71	136	331	462
Jobs	5,872	16,440	30,902	130,045	164,296
Revenues in Million US\$	12.8	44.5	54.6	214.0	350.0

Source: Manzueta Martinez 1994.

From the labor market point of view, critics have argued that industrial employment represents approximately 13% of the country's labor force, but FTZ only employ 3% of them. Likewise, most FTZ workers are women migrants, have very low levels of unionization, and earn less than

the minimum established wage in the country (Gómez 1988).

It has also been argued that the recruitment of young women as the primary source of employment and the high rate of turnover in the FTZ plants have contributed to increase the level of unemployment among women (Sassen 1988:97).

One could safely argue that the emphasis placed in recruiting young women for production contributes to expanding the absolute size of the labor force and undermines the possibilities of the FTZ as a solution to the growing unemployment problem in the country. The composition by sex of the active economic population in the Dominican Republic clearly reflects a tendency towards the "feminization" of the labor force. In 1960, for every 100 persons engaged in the labor force, 11 were women, but by 1981, this number had increased to 29, and by 1983, in the city of Santo Domingo, which is heavily sought by incoming migrants, the number represented 38. The growing proletarianization of women is highly associated with the expansion of the manufacturing subsector, particularly the

FTZ, where they made considerable gains, jumping from 17.5% in 1960 to 28.1% in 1981 (Báez 1985).

Tourism has undergone a remarkable growth during the last 15 years. The amount of revenues generated by this subsector jumped from US\$16.4 million in 1970 to US\$616 in 1988, becoming the single largest contributor in the national economy. From 1980 to 1988 the number of hotel rooms more than doubled, increasing from 5,394 to 13,451, and the number of incoming tourists increased from 753,000 in 1985 to over one million in 1987 (Ceara Hatton 1990b:4-5).

In spite of the remarkable expansion, the tourist industry represents a volatile, seasonal, and highly competitive economic activity that depends on tourist's financial ability, time, and willingness to visit the Dominican Republic. Similarly, its multiplying effects on the economy is highly limited. The service it renders is consumed right at the time of "production" and does not give room for resale. At the same time, the tourist industry contributes to increase the level of importation in the country. This economic activity imports most of

the products it uses, from the beds, linen, and dinner and silverware to most of the food tourists consume. But most of all, tourism is a capital intensive activity that functions on the basis of a skilled and semi-skilled labor force, providing very little room for the employment of unskilled workers. In effect, although tourism generates the largest amount of revenues in the GNP since early 1980, the number of jobs generated in this area has shown only a modest increase, from 10,800 in 1980 to 17,258 in 1987, and to 24,000 in 1989.

X

The Reproduction of Labor Power and Surplus Labor: the Antecedent to Emigration

Theoretically, besides being direct producers, workers are also consumers whose salaries help expand the process of accumulation. In advanced capitalist societies, the remuneration of workers is linked to their internal process of capital accumulation. In these countries, low wages and long periods of unemployment are generally subsidized by the government, through a welfare system, as

an indirect way of stimulating and generating consumption internally¹². The history of the evolution of wages in the Dominican Republic shows that, contrary to advanced technological societies, the remuneration has been traditionally perceived by capitalists as an expenditure rather than as a source of accumulation. Thus, capitalists in this country, seeking to reduce cost in the process of production, are compelled to reduce the cost of that which they understand does not generate any benefit or profit and they try to pay workers lower and lower wages.

Ruy Mauro Marini, a Latin American intellectual, in "Dialéctica de la Dependencia: La Economía Exportadora" (1973) uses dependency theory to argue that the existence of low wages in Latin America is related to the fact that these countries' economies are oriented to the export

12.

This does not take into account the latest transformations of the labor process and wage structures in advanced societies, where the recomposition of capitalist production is progressively leading towards welfare cuts, the imposition of low wages, increasing falls in the demand of labor and the relocation of capital to more profitable areas of production.

market and capitalist accumulation is divorced from the process of circulation (buying/selling/consumption), restricting itself merely to the extraction of surplus value through the over exploitation of workers, meaning, the reduction of their wages to a level incapable of reproducing the worker's own labor power. Marini further notes that it is the large supply of workers in relation to a reduced demand in Latin America what makes the process possible.

Low wages limit worker consumption in the internal market, but the lower remuneration of workers' value, or super exploitation, bespeaks the workers' inability to reproduce their labor power. The reproduction of a worker's labor power is a process which, as described by Claude Meillassoux in *Maidens, Meal, and Money* (1981), goes beyond one worker involved in production. Meillassoux explains that "the volume of subsistence goods produced by each producer must equal or surpass the amount needed to maintain the producer himself, to bring up future producers, and to service the retirement of those who are no longer producing" (1981:51-2). While future

producers represent the worker's replacement in the labor force, retired producers represent those who at the time the worker was underage, provided his reproduction. The reproduction of the three constitutes the productive cycle.

The wage structure in the Dominican Republic generates both processes: a reduced internal market disconnected from workers' consumption and the workers inability to reproduce their labor power. In the case of the FTZs, for instance, their comparative advantage is based on paying extremely low wages in the Dominican Republic. At the time of the establishment of the first FTZ, the salary was set 20% below the country's official minimum wage, which at the time was RD\$60.00 per month. But, as early as 1971, inflationary prices progressively began to reduce the value of the nominal salary, pushing down its real value. After several increases, nominal salary increased from RD\$60.00 in 1969 to RD\$400.00 per month in 1988. But during the same years, as indicated in **Table 5**, the real value of the salary declined progressively, falling from a base value of RD\$60.00

Table 5
Inflation, Minimum Nominal, and Real Salary
(Monthly RD\$)

Year	CPI (Base 1970)	Inflation %	Nominal Salary	Real Salary	R.S. Index
	1	2	3	4	5
1970	1.000	0.00	60	60	1.000
1971	1.043	4.30	60	58	0.967
1972	1.125	7.86	60	53	0.883
1973	1.295	15.11	60	46	0.767
1974	1.465	13.12	60	41	0.683
1975	1.677	14.47	90	54	0.900
1976	1.809	7.87	90	50	0.833
1977	2.041	12.82	90	44	0.733
1978	2.186	7.10	90	41	0.683
1979	2.386	9.15	125	52	0.867
1980	2.785	16.72	125	45	0.750
1981	2.995	7.54	125	42	0.700
1982	3.224	7.65	125	39	0.650
1983	3.447	6.92	125	36	0.600
1984 ¹⁰	4.290	24.46	158	37	0.617
1985 ¹¹	5.89	937.51	213	36	0.600
1986	6.474	9.75	250	39	0.650
1987 ¹²	7.503	15.89	283	38	0.633
1988 ¹³	11.029	46.99	385	35	0.583

Source: Adapted from Ceara Hatton 1990b:75.

Formulas: Real Salary: $3/1=4$

Real Salary Index: $4/\text{CPI } 1970=5$

Rate of Inflation: $\frac{\text{Old CPI} - \text{New CPI}}{\text{Old CPI}} \times 100=2$

10. Increase to RD \$175 in May.

11. Increase to RD \$250 in July.

12. Increase to RD \$350 in September.

13. Increase to RD \$400 in June for the private sector and in April for the public sector.

to RD\$36.00.

Similarly, the workers' low earnings impact on their standard of living. In 1981, the nominal salary was RD\$125.00 per month, but Duarte, Corten, and Pou estimated that during the same year workers needed RD\$181.00 to buy the basic goods and services they used to buy in 1969 with DR\$60.00 (1986:139). By 1982, the gap between earnings and the price of basic goods widened. The nominal salary had remained constant at RD\$125.00, but the price of basic goods and services had increased to RD\$279.50, excluding any expense related to family entertainment or pastime (Vicens 1982:326).

In *Capitalismo y Super Población en Santo Domingo: Mercado de Trabajo Rural y Ejército de Reserva Urbano*, Duarte argues that "the mechanisms of super exploitation deny workers the necessary conditions to reconstitute their energy. By preventing workers from consuming even what is strictly necessary to restore their own energy, workers are condemned to a premature exhaustion" (Duarte 1980:67-8). (Author's translation). Duarte concurs with Marini that superexploitation results from the

availability of an abundant working population, generated by a given process of production and that "migrations represent a mechanism of redistributing that surplus population. The emigration zones, or the areas where the population is rejected, are areas where the productive forces are incapable of absorbing the growing surplus population" (ibib:75). (Author's translation).

XI

Economic Accumulation and Crisis

Since the end of the 1960s, seeking to integrate itself into the world economy, the Dominican Republic has implemented two development strategies: Import substitution and the Export-led Economy. The first emphasized industrial production which, among other things, intended to reduce the level of importation of manufactured products. But, as critics argued, the model failed in its essential mandate. By 1978, it was obvious that the country was importing much more than it was producing and selling. Consequently, a growing deficit began to characterize the economy (see **Table 6**), and an

increasing amount of money was borrowed from foreign institutions. At the beginning, money was borrowed mostly to pay for food, oil, capital goods, and industrial inputs, but later, money was also borrowed to pay for public expenditure and the interests accrued on the same debt. Thus, from a foreign debt of US\$290.6 million in 1970, by 1988, the debt had reached the phenomenal sum of U.S. \$3,844.000,000.

Table 6
Foreign Trade
(In Million of US\$)

Year	Export	Import	Balance
1977	780	847	-67
1978	676	860	-184
1979	869	1,080	-211
1980	962	1,498	-536
1981	1,188	1,450	-262
1982	768	1,248	-480
1983	785	1,279	-494
1984	868	1,257	-389
1985	739	1,286	-547
1986	722	1,266	-544
1987	711	1,591	-880
1988*	890	1,600	-710

*. Preliminary.

Source: Abreu et. al. 1989: 27.

But it was even worse than that. As explained previously, by the end of the 1980s, the Dominican economy had essentially the same industrial coefficient it had in 1968, when Law 299 of industrial incentives was approved. But if the level of industrialization had not increased, the same could not be said about the intensification of capital in the industrial setting, which by 1981, required over RD\$9,000 to create an industrial job. It became obvious, then, that through the politics of IS the Dominican Republic was not going to fix the balance of payments, or reduce the level of imports, or increase the level of production and sale. Even more important than that, the already alarming unemployment rate was not going to stop growing.

Presumably, the adoption of the second strategy, the export-led economy, intended to increase the level of exports and remedy the balance of payment deficit, create new jobs and reduce the level of unemployment. In sum, the new model sought to clean up the economic mess left by the IS model. But, as critics have argued, the problems have remained. The export-led economy has generated activities

which function as economic enclaves, disconnected from the economy, which are highly dependent on foreign inputs, on selective hiring practices, and on paying wages below the level required for the effective reproduction of labor power. Thus, in the end, both economic strategies have failed to establish a solvent economy for the Dominican people.

Thus, for the great majority of those who were looking for jobs, Dominican society was unable to satisfy their employment needs. It is true, as some have correctly claimed, that increasingly the economy was being characterized by low wages and that many employed workers were unable to fulfill their aspirations of social mobility. But a larger problem has been the growing lack of jobs for those who needed to earn a living. If numbers serve to account for people's daily life stories, numbers then reflect that many more women and men are looking for jobs than the number of jobs available in that country. Many people are not looking for a better job, they are just looking for a job. The Instituto de Población and Desarrollo calculated that from 1980 to 1990, the labor

force was going to increase by approximately 90,000 new members per year, but that the economy was going to produce only some 30,000 new jobs per year, leading to a wide disparity between job-seekers and jobs available in the labor market. But of course, these calculations were based on the facts that the birth rate would continue exactly as it was in 1980 (no women could afford to have an extra child); that the death rate would remain constant; and that the same number of people who leave the country for good, would continue to do so; and that no Dominican would dare return home poor from the Diaspora.

It is important to note that while the development strategies failed in their intention of creating a solid economy, free, for instance, of collapsing elements such as budget deficits and higher unemployment and underemployment rates, the strategies in question did not prevent or affect the capitalist accumulation process in the country. Quite the contrary, while the economy continued to exhibit these disturbing symptoms, and most people, particularly from the working sectors, suffered the rigors of a harsh economy, the capitalist sectors have

benefitted. They have capitalized, precisely on the implementation of such development strategies.

The development of an industrial infrastructure that depended heavily on the use of foreign inputs for production led to trade deficits and loss of revenues. But the same infrastructure also contributed to the expansion of private industrial capital in the country and the growth of international capitalism outside the geographical boundaries of the Dominican Republic. Thus, while Dominicans read in the papers and heard in the news that the economy was not performing well because prices for Dominican products were falling precipitously, or that oil prices were too high in the international market and that the economy was being drained, specific economic indicators such as net gain, capital investment, sales, and savings show that for some, as showed in the data that follow below, the Dominican economy was performing rather well.

Table 7 indicates that between 1970 and 1977, after deducting the cost of production, the industrial sector reflected a net capital gain of over .38% per year.

Similarly, from 1961 to 1981, the number of industrial establishments tripled. The value of sales increased 15 times just as the amount of capital invested in the manufacturing sector quadrupled, going from RD\$307 million to RD\$1,259 million. The amount of capital deposited by Dominicans in U.S. and European banks from 1966 to 1983 increased 16 times, from RD\$53.2 million to DR\$895.0 million (Moya Pons 1992: 344, 405). It is important to add that while accumulation was taking place internally, in a similar fashion, foreign capital was increased through the internationalization of the Dominican economy as reflected in an increasing demand of import-related goods for production and consumption as well as in an increasing foreign debt.

The comparison of the growth of the GNP and jobs shows that increasing unemployment rates, for instance, are not related to a falling GNP, but rather to the incapacity of the forces of production to create enough jobs. From 1970 to 1981 the aggregated value of the agriculture-ranching sector increased from (RD\$) 345.2 million to 483.9 million, reflecting an increase of a 40%, but the number of employed workers in the sector

Table 7

Net Profit of the Industrial Sector: 1970-1977
(In Million of RD\$)

Year	Sales \$	Cost Of Prod.	Net Profit	Rate of Profit* (in %)
	1	2	3	
1970	583.3	390.6	192.7	49.3
1971	677.3	438.1	239.2	54.6
1972	826.2	521.	304.6	58.8
1973	1058.4	690.	368.4	53.4
1974	1478.1	1032.	445.5	43.6
1975	1890.1	1252.	637.2	50.8
1976	1821.0	1310.0	510.7	38.9
1977	2029.5	1456.4	573.1	39.3

Source: Lozano 1985:232.

*. **Formula:** Rate of Profit: $3/2$

increased only 20%, from 502,634 to 602,908. During the same period, industrial production increased its aggregated value from RD\$ 315.6 million to 703.8 million, reflecting an extraordinary rise of 123%. Yet, the number of workers in the sector increased only 30%, from 113,040 to 147,086 (Author's calculations from Santana and Tatis 1985:30).

Thus, at the end of the 1980s, Dominicans had experienced two development strategies that did not solve the socio-economic problems of many people. Furthermore, for many sectors of the working class, when economic improvement has occurred, it has not translated into the creation of better jobs or new jobs. For many of the Dominican people the behavior of the Dominican economy seems irrelevant. No matter how well the economy performed, their economic conditions did not improve, and their fate remained uncertain. For instance, the 1968-75 period is identified by every economist as the time when the Dominican society experienced the highest economic growth in its history, but the period witnessed growing inequality, poverty, and social distress. For many people, neither the 60s, nor the 70s, or 80s brought significant improvement to their lives. On the contrary, as indicated in **Table 8** which denotes the changes in the distribution of income during the 1970s, in the Dominican society, the poor, through an invisible process of transference, became poorest, while other social classes, were largely benefitted.

Table 8

**Changes in the Distribution of Income in Santo Domingo
1969-1973**

Group of Income % of the Total # of Families		% of the Total Income of the Working Sectors	
Year		1969	1973
20%	(lowest)	2.9	1.4
50%	(low-middle)	17.6	15.4
30%	(middle)	27.6	30.2
20%	(top)	54.8	54.4

Source: Lozano 1985: 160.

From 1969 to 1973 the groups of the population with the lowest income significantly reduced their share in the total income. These groups experienced an extraordinary loss of income, declining from 2.9% in 1969 to 1.4% in 1973, reflecting a loss of almost a half of their income in four years. While the top groups of the population continued to hold their share, concentrating 54.8% of the total income in 1969 and 54.4% in 1973, the middle income groups experienced a significant increase in their share, increasing from 27.6% in 1969 to 30.2% in 1973 (Lozano

1985:160). Lozano argues that during Balaguer's first three presidential terms the pattern of capitalist accumulation was based on the development of an industrial, commercial, and finance bourgeoisie, the exploitation of industrial sugar workers and the peasantry, and the expansion and consolidation of an urban middle class. He divides the middle class into two subsectors according to income and occupations, claiming that the lower middle class consisted of an enlarged bureaucracy of workers that had low earnings but was quantitatively important, while the upper middle class consisted of highly paid workers connected to the commercial and finance sectors. It was this last group of highly paid workers who, in Lozano's view, constituted the major consumers and buyers of imported goods and provided the main source of accumulation for the import bourgeoisie (ibid:160-73).

Poverty has increased considerably during the last 20 years or so in the country. In a national survey conducted by the Central Bank between 1976 and 1977, it was found that 51.3% of the households in the country had a deficit in their monthly budget. These households earned 20.9% of

the total income, but had a consumption of 26.0%. The same study showed that 90% of the population did not consume the recommended amount of nutrients and that 23.3% of the people were below the poverty level (Del Rosario Mota and Madera Daniel 1984). By 1984, 40.8% of the children under 5 years of age were malnourished, and the number of families below the poverty level had doubled, rising to 47%, and increasing again by 1989 to 56% (Santana and Rathe 1993:189). (See **Table 9**).

Table 9

Poverty in the Dominican Republic
(Millions of People and % of Total population)

	1984	%	1989	%
Indigent	1.4	22.7	2.5	35.2
Poor	1.5	24.0	1.5	20.8
Total Poor	2.9	46.6	4.0	56.0

Source: Santana and Rathe 1993: 189-93.

Economists Isidoro Santana and Magdalena Rathe measured the poverty level in the country by using a methodology whereby the working population was classified according to household income and expenses and divided into two groups. The poor were those below the poverty line and the non-poor were above the line. Households where 60% or more of the income was spent in food were considered below the poverty line. Indigent households were those that, even after using all their income in food, could not obtain an appropriate diet. They calculated that in 1989 the median poor (mid income below the poverty line) needed to increase their income by 22% just to reach the classification of non-poor. They thought it unlikely that the gap between the poor and non-poor could be eliminated in the near future. They reasoned that "if the income of all the poor began a sustained increase of 3% per year, just the median poor would need 8 years to leave the category of poor, but that those poor with an income below the mid-income poor, would remain poor" (Santana and Rather 1993:89-91) (Author's translation).

Table 10

**Sectorial Evolution of Employed Population
(Santo Domingo 1980-1983)**

	1980	1983	Rate of Growth
Government ¹	24.6	22.2	2.5
Modern Private ²	36.8	32.8	2.0
Informal ³	26.7	32.5	14.8
Domestic ⁴	11.4	11.6	7.3
Others ⁵	0.5	0.9	-
Total	100.0	100.0	6.6

Source: Ceara Hatton 1990a:146

1. Government Sector: Includes all persons employed in state institutions, including central government, independent independent, semi-independent or state industries.
2. Modern Private Sector: Includes all persons employed in industries, business, or private institutions with 5 workers or more. It also includes people with university education even if they work in places with less than 5 workers.
3. Informal Sector: Includes those persons with education below the university level and who work in private institutions and businesses with five workers or less. It excludes the domestic service.
4. Domestic Sector: Includes all persons who work in the domestic service.
5. Others: Includes all persons not included in the above categories.

The 1980s were a difficult time for many workers. One could no longer speak of a landless peasantry, an industrial proletariat, (whether adhered to the sugar industries or the urban FTZ), or workers in the informal economy. During the 80s, or "the lost decade," in the words of economist Bernardo Vega, most workers who needed to work for a living were affected.

The transference process in benefit of the middle class in particular, sustained by Balaguer's economic policies, came to an end. Middle class sectors now felt that they were not an exception to the rule. They lost jobs, and their salaries lost purchasing power. Stable and well paid jobs were increasingly substituted by less desirable jobs. Between 1980 and 1983, for instance, the number of employed people in the modern private sector decreased from 36.8% to 32.8%, but the number of workers in the informal sector increased from 26.7% to 32.5% (See **Table 10**). Similarly, during the same years, the government jobs' median earnings declined from RD\$251 to RD\$233 (See **Table 11**). From a middle-range analysis one would conclude that the asphyxiating situation was generated concretely by a fall in the price of Dominican export

products in the international market and by an increase in the level of importations. But a historical-structural analysis would lead one to conclude that in the end the "crisis" was the result of a structurally deformed economy, an economy that obstinately insisted in satisfying its increasing internal needs by importing, and by producing exactly what outsiders demanded.

Table 11

Sectorial Median Income
(RD\$ Monthly)

Year	1980	1983	Difference
Government	251	233	-7.0
Modern	308	300	-1.6
Informal	195	181	-4.0
Domestic	58	55	-5.2

Source: Adapted from Ceara Hatton 1990a: 184.

By 1978, Balaguer's first 12 years of government came to an end. The Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD) would govern from 1978 to 1986, the year when Balaguer would come to power again. Antonio Guzmán, the first PRD government, followed the Keynesian model of direct

government intervention by increasing the level of investments to stimulate economic activity and generate jobs. In effect, the period 1979-1982 was characterized by an expansion of the aggregate demand through state investments, an increase of real salaries, and an increase in agriculture-ranching production (Ceara Hatton and Croes Hernández 1993:14) But unemployment remained high. The new jobs created, particularly in the public sector and the agribusiness industries (see **Tables 12 and 13**), were simply not enough to address the severe unemployment problem. Similarly, jobs created in the public sector were non-productive and the agribusiness industries proved to be activities that in requiring advanced technology and techniques, reduced the number of workers in proportion to the amount of capital invested.

Foreign debt also increased. The government financed its program, including the creation of non-productive jobs, by borrowing from foreign banks. At the same time, the prices of oil went up in the international market as the prices of Dominican export products fell precipitously. Between 1981 and 1982, the price of sugar

Table 12

Investments and Jobs in Agribusiness
(in RD\$)

Year	1983	1984	1985
Total Investments	112,031,707	49,676,234	156,793,476
Total Jobs Created	2,508	2,365	2,990
Agricultural Jobs	(1,885)	(1,453)	(1,555)
Industrial Jobs	(623)	(912)	(1,435)

Source: Adapted from Moya Pons 1992: 387

fell 45%, tobacco 66%, gold 27%, and bauxite 67% (Ceara Hatton and Croes Hernández 1993). By 1982, the country, unable to pay its foreign creditors, was placed under an austerity plan by the International Monetary Fund, which strongly restricted the level of imports and froze workers' wages. By 1984, open unemployment reached 24.2%, by 1985, 27.2%, and by 1986, 28.7%. Inflation, on the other hand, increased from 7.7% in 1983 to 38% in 1984, to 47% in 1985 (Ceara Hatton and Croes Hernández 1993:17). For the Dominican people, the economy reflected a state of severe crisis. For capitalists, however, the economy reflected the exhaustion of an economic model based on

Table 13**Dominican Republic Public Sector Workers**

1950-1986

Year	Total	Year	Total
1950	40,476	1971	100,230
1951	47,703	1972	97,413
1952	50,391	1973	100,184
1953	46,429	1974	111,899
1954	42,292	1975	116,946
1955	55,390	1976	119,423
1956	61,692	1977	122,341
1957	71,269	1978	123,018
1958	77,926	1979	144,090
1959	81,546	1980	170,216
1960	84,934	1981	195,411
1961	88,026	1982	211,595
1962	110,349	1983	227,247
1963	112,568	1984	210,133
1964	112,002	1985	220,574
1965	99,159	1986	219,690
1966	97,999		
1967	98,728		
1968	96,584		
1969	93,281		
1970	98,899		

Source: *Población y Desarrollo* 1985:25.

the production of traditional products and the sectoral relocation of capital.

XII

Public Spending

During Balaguer's governments, public spending was heavily concentrated in the construction of huge public projects, such as water-supply lines, roads, highways, public housing, parks, and monuments. The idea was to modernize and beautify the country, particularly the city of Santo Domingo, which by 1977 contained 70% of the construction in the country. The construction agenda of the government sought to create jobs directly and to stimulate the economy (Serrulle Ramia 1984). But Balaguer's construction politics did not address social needs. If some projects generated social investments, such as the creation of a sewage system and water-supply lines, this was simply because they accorded with the interest of the government. Similarly, the construction policy demanded a heavy concentration of the public funds in detriment to other areas. In 1989, 63% of the total

public funds was invested in construction (Santana and Rathe 1993:147).

But the level of investment in the public sector has been traditionally low in the Dominican Republic, as compared to other countries in the region. Historically, public investment has remained significantly below 20% of the GNP. But during the "lost decade", investment in the sector declined dramatically, from RD\$12.9 million in 1980 to RD\$7.8 million in 1991 (Ceara Hatton and Hernández Croes 1993:98). A brief look at health indicators would show that social conditions have progressively deteriorated in this country. In 1964, for instance, there were 2.7 hospital beds per 1000 people, decreasing to 1.2 beds per 1000 people in 1984. While in 1980 the infant mortality rate (per 1000 born alive) had been 29.7, by 1985 it became 58.6. Similarly, in 1988, 51.7 of the population did not have drinkable water, and 59.7 was still uncovered by a sewerage system (ibid:92). In general, in 1981 health programs received in real value RD\$77.0 million, but by 1991 the amount went down to RD\$54.6 million (Santana and Rather 1993:171)

Public investment in education has been approached through the same inadequate funding policy. In the 1980s, the proportion of the aggregate value of the GNP invested in public education was reduced in per-capita and real terms. Public spending in education declined from 2.2% of the GNP in the period 1978-1982, to 1.9% in the 1983-1986 period, and to 1.5% in the 1987-1990 period. During the same periods, real per-capita spending declined by 60% (Ibid:78) It is important to note also that, just as in the United States, in the Dominican Republic most of the public spending in education is absorbed by salaries, particularly paid to administrators who are part of the school bureaucracy. By 1990, 90% of the funding allocated to public education went to salaries.

A General Assessment of Migrants and Migration from the Dominican Republic

During the 1970s, arguably 1 out of every 4 Dominicans migrating to the United States was likely to be a blue-collar worker, specifically, an operative, and 3 in every 50 had a professional or technical career.

During the same decade, less than 1 out of every 2 Dominicans was likely to have an occupation at the time of migrating to the United States.¹³ During the 1980s, the pattern slightly changed since many more Dominicans, particularly males, reported to have an occupation before departure. Although blue-collar workers continued to dominate the migratory flow by a very large margin, that decade featured more professional and technical workers migrating than during the 1970s. The data reflect that during the 1980s more than 1 out of every 2 Dominican males was likely to have an occupation before migration, while less than 1 out of every 2 women was likely to have one. Similarly, 2 out of every 25 Dominican males was likely to have a professional or technical skill, while approximately 9 out of every 25 was likely to be an

13.

This calculation is based on the following data. During the 1970s less than 50% of Dominicans reported to have an occupation before migrating to the United States. The numbers were 46.8% for 1970; 36.5% for 1973; 35.7 for 1974; 29.3% for 1975; 28.0% in 1976; and 35.4% in 1977. In 1982, out of 17,451 Dominicans admitted, only 6,216 reported to have an occupation before migrating to the U.S. The number of people who did not report an occupation before migration included house-wives, children, and others. For data consult INS reports for the years mentioned.

operative. Out of every 14 women admitted, 1 reported to have a professional or technical career, and 1 out of every 8 women was likely to be an operative worker.¹⁴

The increase in the number of professional and technical workers migrating from the Dominican Republic during the 1980s, as compared to the 1970s, corresponded to the progressive deterioration of the public services, the drastic fall of the value of the peso, and the loss of stable and well-paid jobs in the sending society. The 1980s was the decade of the intervention of the International Monetary Fund and its austerity plan. By 1991, the purchasing power of the minimum wage reflected half the value it had in the 1970s. And salary readjustment in the large companies of the modern sector brought these salaries down to 60% of their value in the 1970s. As we showed before, during the 1980s, many members of the middle class sectors could not escape the

14.

The data for the 1980s was calculated by the author from information provided by the Department of City Planning in *The Newest New Yorkers: An Analysis of Immigration into New York City During the 1980s* (see sources cited). The data included only Dominicans who were 16 to 64 years old, and those who did not report an occupation were subdivided into students, unemployed, and homemakers.

negative effects of the economic changes occurring in the country. This time, they too were heavily impacted. If during the 1970s, the middle class in particular benefitted from the expatriation of surplus laborers and the direct transferring of resources from the poor and less privileged sectors, the economic restructuring of the 1980s provoked the dislocation of a more diverse group, directly affecting many members of the middle class sectors and pushing them to seek the same solution constantly sought by the less privileged groups.

As we have seen, the exodus from the Dominican Republic to the United States accelerated during the 1980s. The number of Dominicans leaving home progressively increased. Among those who are still leaving the Island to come to the U.S., the proportion of those who are unskilled members of the working class represents the overwhelming majority. The majority of those who come are dark-skinned, and women predominate over men. These are facts. It is also factual that Dominicans come to a society undergoing a process which has left the productive system without the kinds of jobs these new immigrants are equipped to do. They come into a

racially stratified society where blacks and other dark people are marginalized, and where since the very beginning Dominicans were not wanted as workers. While doing research in the Dominican Republic Gonzalez noted that "The refusal rate on non-immigrant visas is surprising and significant. The two consulates together turned down 16,115 applicants for this type of visa in 1966...persons traveling on non-immigrant visas who have no intention of returning to the Dominican Republic in the immediate future...are the persons whom the U.S consulate would like to refuse visas" (1970:160). She believed that those who were unlikely to return home, were in reality economic migrants, produced by the rural-urban mobility. They were neither tourists nor business people. They simply wanted to go to the U.S. to seek for jobs and stay there. She was convinced that these job-seeker-Dominicans were the ones who were likely to be rejected by the American consulates.

Finally, at the time when Dominicans began to arrive in the U.S. Puerto Ricans had already been living here for decades without achieving significant economic progress as a group. A team of social scientists who

studied Puerto Rican migrants during the 1960s described the scenario awaiting the newcomers as follows: "Many of the [Puerto Rican] migrants are women, in a society where women's economic lot is still often difficult; many are Negroes, in a society in which color counts heavily against them; and most of the migrants -both Negroes and whites, both women and men- are without much skill, in a society where skill is increasingly important to adequate livelihood; and all enter a society where the opportunities for advancement seem increasingly too narrow for the poor, the uneducated, and the 'foreign'" (Mills, Senior, and Goldsen 1967:38-39). The irony is that the lugubrious scenario associated with Puerto Ricans decades ago accords fittingly with the situation that Dominicans immigrants encounter upon their arrival in the receiving society. What remains to be seen is whether the changes being proposed in the U.S. to curtail immigration, particularly that concerning blue-collar and unskilled workers, will leave the Dominican power structure without an open door to the United States through which to diligently and quietly expel surplus labor, and whether expelled Dominicans already living in the U.S. can survive

as a group in an unfriendly society that did not invite them.

Chapter II

DOMINICANS IN THE LABOR MARKET

The labor market experience of immigrants in the receiving society is commonly used as a reliable measure of their levels of economic progress. Their place in the job market, earnings, rates of labor force participation, and patterns of employment as well as unemployment are among the salient variables that indicate immigrant progress. At the same time, each one of these variables is affected by the type of workers the productive market needs and the value ascribed to the immigrant workers' abilities and skills. If the abilities and skills of an immigrant group are badly needed and highly valued in the receiving society, that group will most likely have high rates of employment and competitive earnings. The labor market experience of the same immigrant group, however, would be quite different if its abilities and skills are found in abundance and depreciated in the receiving society. In the end, then, the material well-being of immigrants would be determined not only by their incorporation into the labor market of the receiving

society but also by the nature and effectivity of that incorporation.

Dominicans As Workers In New York City

Dominicans are economic migrants who have massively moved out of the Dominican Republic in search of a better life. Their migratory flow, which began after 1966, has continued to increase, accelerating particularly during the 1980s. According to the U.S. census, in 1990 there

Table 14

The Dominican Population of New York City, by Borough

New York City Borough	Number		% of Total Dom. Pop., 1990
	1980	1990	
Manhattan	62,660	136,696	41.1%
The Bronx	17,640	87,261	26.2
Brooklyn	21,140	55,301	16.6
Queens	23,780	52,309	15.7
Staten Island	160	1,146	0.4
Total	125,380	332,713	100.0

Source: Hernández, Ramona, Francisco Rivera-Batiz, and Roberto Agodini. 1995. *Dominican New Yorkers: A Socioeconomic Profile*. New York: CUNY Dominican Studies Institute.

were 511,297 Dominicans living in the United States, and over 65% of them were residing in the state of New York alone.

In 1990, New York City in particular accounted for over 93% of those Dominicans who were living in the New York State area. As indicated in **Table 14**, from 1980 to 1990 the Dominican population of the city increased from 125,380 to 332,713 to become the ethnic group with the largest growth in the city for that period. As indicated in **Graph 1** (Chap.1), their remarkable numerical gain was the result of a constant and growing immigration influx. But their massive arrival occurred at a time when New York City was undergoing a socio-economic restructuring, which would have a remarkable impact on the need for and value of labor as well as in the creation of jobs.

The socio-economic restructuring of New York City, which has been well studied and documented by other scholars, is beyond the scope of this study. The present study will only look briefly at those details that may help to clarify the position of Dominicans in the labor market of the city. The restructuring of the city has involved a transformation from an economy based

predominantly on industrial production to one based on services. As a result of this change, today New York City is commonly classified as a post-industrial city.

Scholars generally agree that some time during the 1950s the large manufacturing sector which had characterized the economic life of the city began to shrink. The shrinking process manifested itself in the disappearance of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs, particularly in the garment industry, the largest area of industrial production. From 1969 to 1985, for instance, the city lost 465,000 manufacturing jobs (Drennan 1991:29). The restructuring process dislocated productive jobs directly as well as a whole variety of other jobs that were tangentially connected to the manufacturing sector. Entire industrial headquarters moved out, and with them their employment opportunities. From 1969 to 1989, for instance, employment in wholesale trade declined from 309,000 to 229,000, and in trucking and warehousing from 41,000 to 26,000 (Drennan 1991:32). But overall, the decline in employment occurred primarily among blue-collar and unskilled workers who suffered from 1970 to 1986 the loss of 510,000 jobs in fields that

required less than twelve years of education (Kasarda 1990:247).

The Larger Economic Picture

The dislocation of jobs came not only as a direct result of the shift of the economy from manufacturing to service but also from downward economic trends affecting the nation and its regions. Robert Pollin has pointed out that at the national level "stagnation of the U.S. economy since the mid-1960s has been apparent in high unemployment rates and declining real wages, in slower overall GNP growth and low-capacity utilization, and the downward trend of capital profitability" (Pollin 1993:123). These economic problems, Pollin argues, became exacerbated during the 1970s when, in an attempt to reverse the negative effects by inducing growth, the country adopted the strategy of increasing the public debt. While borrowing enabled the corporate sector to invest, without affecting its already reduced levels of profits, the government relied on borrowed funds to continue its expenditure and fuel its politics of growth.

The above national trend had profound repercussions at the regional level. Andrés Torres and Frank Bonilla show that since the early 1970s the New York region has experienced a downward economic movement as may be gathered from employment, production output, and personal income. The authors explain that "Between 1972 and 1982, for example, the Gross Regional Product fell as a proportion of Gross National Product from 12.3% to 10.9%. [And that] There was a parallel erosion of shares in total employment (from 9.7% to 8.6%) and aggregate personal income (from 12.5% to 10.0%)" (Torres and Bonilla 1993:88).

As indicated in **Graph 5**, general unemployment remained high in New York City often exceeding the national average. Unemployment began to decline in the mid 1980s only to rise again, reaching in 1992 the high levels of the 1970s. Although by 1982 the city entered a stage of brief economic recovery, it was really due to "falling labor participation rates and declining employment population ratios" that unemployment rates showed perceptible reductions (Torres and Bonilla 1993:

88) .

To have a clear grasp of the effects of job dislocation particularly on workers in blue-collar and non-skilled jobs, one need only look at the profile of groups normally associated with the labor market in question. In that respect, Clara Rodríguez has cited among the major factors causing a high incidence of poverty and unemployment in the Puerto Rican community during the 1950s and 1970s in New York City the narrowing of the manufacturing sector which had been the group's major source of employment at the time of its arrival and still concentrated 60% of its labor force by the 1960s (Rodríguez 1979:208). Scholars have found similar effects among African-Americans. Wilson explains that the loss of manufacturing jobs, which had traditionally been a niche for black workers, had a tremendously negative impact on the well-being of that community, resulting in considerably high degrees of social distress, poverty, and disempowerment. Wilson adds that today the low educational attainment of blacks as well as their pattern of concentration in urban settings hamper the ability to

gain employment in the rising service sector or in the new blue-collar and unskilled jobs that are generated in suburban areas (Wilson 1987:39-41).

The scenario described above would suggest that the period of the economic transformation discussed here has been a tough time to be an unskilled Puerto Rican or Black worker. Indeed, these two groups have endured trying times not only through poverty and joblessness but also through budgetary deficits stemming from economic downturns. They live in cities where public services to the streets, parks, schools, the transportation system, hospitals, and all institutions depending on public resources have been reduced in quality and quantity. For many residents leaving the city became a necessary option. In the 1960s whites began to leave the city, and their flight would accelerate in the two decades that followed. By 1970, Puerto Ricans and blacks, males or females, all those who could afford to exit the city, packed up and left. The census indicates that from 1970 to 1980, New York City lost 10.4% of its overall population, a net total of 824,261 persons.

The Restructuring of the Economy: A Theory of Job Creation

In *The Mobility of Labor and Capital* (1988) Sassen states that the shifting of the economy from manufacturing to services generated a need for unskilled migrant workers. Among her various tenets, Sassen contends that contrary to what many believe, cheap immigrant labor is employed not only in decaying economic sectors but also in growing productive areas. The shifting of the economy, she adds, created global cities where the development of advanced service sectors resulted in new low-paying jobs and the expansion of the informal economy. Similarly, industrial production did not just disappear. Instead, it was mainly reduced and transformed, generating in the process new low-paying jobs. Thus, the demand for a low-value labor force was sustained. Sassen connects post 1965 immigrants with the labor force that would take on these new jobs.

Sassen explains the economic shift as one whereby the large manufacturing industries based on a standardized, capital intensive production were replaced by the development of another type of industrial option

represented by small industrial settings, scarce mechanization, and intensive use of labor. On account of the recurrence of sweatshops and industrial homework, low-wages, dead-end jobs, and lack of unionization, Sassen has referred to this industrial option as a "downgraded manufacturing sector" (p.23). The author adds that the expansion of the service sector has involved not only the generation of highly paid professional and technical jobs, but also a vast infrastructure of low-paying service jobs that require low levels of skill and minimal language proficiency. Using data from a survey from the New York State Department of Labor, she shows that "Of all occupations in all the service industries covered by the sample, 16.7 percent were identified as low-wage jobs: of these 10.8 percent were in finance, insurance and real estate; 23.9 percent were in business services, and 18.9 percent were in the remaining service industries" (p.158). Jobs associated with this sector rely on poorly-trained workers since they include low managerial and clerical positions as well as undesirable shifts such as night or weekend. Besides, high paying service sector jobs have a

way of generating low-paying jobs. Patterns of consumption of high paid workers facilitate the creation of jobs associated with their life styles. Many of these jobs, Sassen adds, are part of the underground economy and include "the preparation of specialties and gourmet foods, the production of decorative items and luxury clothing and other personal goods, various kinds of services for cleaning, repair, [and] errand-running" (p.158). She states that the relative shortage of labor in the host country is what largely explains the demand for immigrant workers. Jobs became available at the time when native supply of low-value and powerless workers decreased in so far as the formerly available pool consisted of workers who "have become politicized, are unwilling to take highly undesirable jobs even if they pay minimum wage, and have access to welfare as an alternative to low-wage jobs" (pp.39-40). Moreover, unionization, among some, and "weak labor-market attachments" among others, have affected the availability of a native cohort of cheap workers (p.128). In addition to their function as workers in a society facing a relative shortage of labor, immigrant workers,

Sassen adds, are attractive to employers for their low-wage status as well as for their lack of negotiating power (p.40).

Sassen has brought a new argument and fresh analytical insight to sustain the traditional belief that the arrival of immigrant workers coincides with a demand for low-wage workers. Increasing unemployment levels, particularly among minorities and unskilled workers, and systematic economic downturns gave grounds to believe that the mobility of labor and capital (whether national or internationally) essentially meant a search for maximizing profit and the increasing displacement of workers. And while many had thus began to question the abilities of modern capitalist societies to create enough jobs and their need for an increasing pool of workers, whether native or immigrants, Sassen found sources of employment which created the demand for a variety of low-skilled immigrant workers. Thus, her work provided a direct answer to those who questioned on the grounds of job shortages the increasing entrance of new job-seekers. The experience of Dominicans, however, would seem to defy the

correlation between immigrant workers and a labor demand in the United States. Contrary to Sassen's proposition, Dominicans, for the most part, have not come to occupy booming low-wage job markets. Nor can it be argued that the host society shows a need for Dominican workers. Using 1980 and 1990 data from the U.S. census of population, the next section will describe and explain the position of Dominicans in the labor market of New York City after three decades of migration¹. The idea is to show how an immigratory movement of job-seekers can coincide perfectly with a period of job shortage in a receiving society.

I

Industrial Distribution of Dominican Labor Force

As indicated in **Table 15** the industrial distribution

¹. This study is based primarily on data from census population for 1980 and 1990. Although the massive migration of Dominicans to U.S. began around 1966, it is not until the 1980s that a reliable census sample size could be found. When possible, however, I will make use of data from ethnographic studies which capture Dominicans in the labor market during their early arrival.

for the 1980s and 1990s of the ethnic groups compared in this chapter², suggests that in both decades Dominicans had by far the highest percentage of people employed in manufacturing. In 1990, a total of 25.7 percent of Dominicans 16 years of age or older worked in the manufacturing sector. During the same year, the percentages for Hispanics, including Puerto Ricans, was 18.6, for non-Hispanic whites, 10.9, and 8.2 for non-Hispanic blacks. Compared to 1980, in 1990 Dominicans, as well as the other groups, considerably reduced their participation in the manufacturing industry. The reduction, connected to the overall shift that started in the 1950s and has led to a transformed economy, may be said to have had a disproportionate impact on Dominican workers who experienced a decline from 48.6 percent to 25.7 percent, that is, nearly half of those employed in the sector.

². This chapter will compare Dominicans and aggregate data from major ethnic groups (Hispanics, non-Hispanic whites, and non-Hispanic blacks), and New York City Overall. Chapters 3 and 4 will look at Dominicans in comparison with Puerto Ricans and other major Hispanic groups in New York City.

Table 15

**Industrial Distribution of the Labor Force
New York City 1979-1989**

Industry	Non-HW	Non-HB	Hisp.	Dominican
Agriculture Forestry and Mining	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.3
Construction	4.9	4.2	4.9	4.3
Manufacturing	10.9	8.2	18.6	25.7
Transp., Comm. and Public Utility	8.2	11.7	7.6	6.6
Trade	17.9	14.1	22.5	27.6
FIRE	13.1	10.1	8.6	5.5
Professional Services (Health, Educat.)	28.7	32.0	19.7	14.4
Business Services	6.2	7.1	7.0	6.8
Personal/ Entertainment Services	5.5	5.8	7.0	7.0
Public Adm.	4.1	6.5	3.6	1.9

Source: Same as Table 14.

The drastic loss of manufacturing jobs among Dominicans is connected to a sectoral decline and the market's inability to re-absorb workers after its transformation. Since the 1950s, the manufacturing sector has experienced an increasing loss in jobs, and the industry's creation of new ones has not sufficed to alter the declining movement. As Sassen correctly notes, the manufacturing industry began a process of change which eliminated many jobs and generated others. A reflection of that change is the proliferation of thousands of small firms established throughout New York City and the neighboring city of Long Island, whose production is not standardized or oriented to a general public. These customer-oriented small firms cater to the needs of small clienteles. However, these new firms, ranging from electronics (particularly for the defense industry) to apparel and furniture, manage to employ only a small fraction of the total labor force of the city (O'Neill and Moss 1991:10).

The limited capacity of job creation exhibited by the new industries accords with the fact that many of them do not require a large workforce for production. Generally, these industries produce for a small and selected

clientele whose primary requirement is quality not quantity. Moreover, production in these industries is organized around what is called intellectual capital, meaning the combination of "patents, processes, management skills, technologies, information about customer and suppliers, and old-fashioned experience" as defined by O'Neill and Moss (1991:9). That is to say that although these industries could draw from an intensive use of labor rather than of capital, their level of output is reduced in scale. Moreover, their production remains linked to an overall labor force which ultimately cannot be completely unskilled.

Similarly, the creation of jobs in the manufacturing sector is highly linked to trends in the national economy. Thus, while jobs in the industries associated with the production of durable goods, including cars, computers, furniture, and appliances experienced some increases as a direct result of national growth during times of economic recovery, jobs in the apparel industry, particularly those associated with fashion, have undergone a constant decline. In particular, the apparel industry, which is

the largest area of production within manufacturing, and the one that absorbs the largest number of Dominican workers, did not expand its number of jobs although it did respond to local demand by transforming into small shops oriented to the production of elaborate and expensive clothing for exclusive customers. In fact, from 1984 to 1985 the apparel industry lost 12.5 percent of its share in the labor market without generating one single new job during the period (Annual Report on Social Indicators 1991:44).

Table 15 also indicates that in the 1980s Dominicans began to move to the service sector as evinced by their increasing participation in trade and professional services. Compared to the other ethnic groups, Dominicans had the highest percentage of people employed in trade in 1990. While for Dominicans employment in trade represented 27.6 percent, for non-Hispanic whites it represented 17.9 percent, for non-Hispanic blacks 10.1 percent, and for Hispanics 22.5 percent. Trade among Dominicans is associated with employment in retail trade,

particularly in eating and drinking establishments, grocery stores, apparel shoes, and accessory stores.

The movement of Dominicans to the service sector has in no way compensated their loss of jobs in the manufacturing industry. On the contrary, their movement has been characterized by an absolute loss of jobs and, as we will see later, in an increase in unemployment and a decrease in labor force participation rates. If one follows closely their sectoral movement, one will see that a clear pattern begins to emerge, a pattern which reflects that Dominicans are caught in a no-win situation. They are faced with expulsion from a declining job market and only a moderate inclusion into sectors of a job market that happens to be characterized by a slow or negative growth.

In short, while Dominicans have increased their participation rate in the service sector, the participation itself is quantitatively limited, and involves an association with the least dynamic job markets of the service sector. As **Graph 6** shows, substantial growth in the service sector has occurred within the FIRE

(finance, insurance, real estate) industries as well as in government jobs and not in trade or TCPU (transportation, communication, and public utilities), two of the three service sector job markets where the participation of Dominicans has moderately increased. Trade and TCPU in general were characterized by absolute job loss in the 1980s. **Table 15** also indicates that compared to the other ethnic groups, in 1990, Dominicans had the lowest representation in the FIRE industries as well as in public administration jobs. Take the FIRE industry for instance. While a total of 5.5 percent of Dominicans gained employment in this market, the percentages for the other groups were 13.1 percent for non-Hispanic whites, 10.1 percent for non-Hispanic blacks, and 8.6 percent for Hispanic.

II

Occupational Distribution

Occupational distribution among Dominicans clearly indicates that compared to the other ethnic groups, Dominicans are highly under-represented in the

professional and managerial occupational categories. As indicated in **Table 16**, in 1990, a total of only 9.6 percent of Dominicans gained employment in professional and managerial jobs, compared to non-Hispanic whites who had a 38.5 percent, non-Hispanic blacks, who accounted for 19.6 percent, and Hispanics, who had 13.9 percent. Dominicans also have the highest proportion of workers employed in blue-collar and unskilled jobs (laborers, fabricators, and operators). While 30.9 percent of Dominicans worked in blue-collar occupations, the percentages for the other groups in that sector are 7.6 percent for non-Hispanic whites, 12.8 percent for non-Hispanic blacks, and a total of 22.1 percent for Hispanics.

A close look at occupational distribution indicates that although Dominicans continued to be over-represented in blue-collar manufacturing jobs in 1990, as indicated in **Table 16** during the 1980s they lost a solid 15.9 percent share in that job market. Also, besides their modest increase of 7.3 percent in middle and low white-collar jobs (technical, sales, and clerical) from 1980 to 1990,

Table 16

**Occupational Distribution of the Labor Force in New York
City**

(Persons 16 years of age or older)

Occupation	Non-HW	Non-HB	Hispanic	Dom.
Managerial & Professional	38.5%	19.6%	13.9%	9.6%
Technical, Sales, & Adm. Support	35.6	36.6	30.9	27.1
Service Workers	10.1	24.0	23.1	22.5
Farming, Forestry & Fishing	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.4
Precision Product. Craft and Repair	7.8	6.6	9.4	9.6
Operators, Fabricators, & Laborers	7.6	12.8	22.1	30.9

Source: Same as Table 14.

they did not obtain any significant gain in any of the occupational categories of the service sector. Thus, contrary to the claim that immigrants are needed for a variety of blue-collar and low-skill jobs generated within

the service economy, we found that among Dominicans the loss of blue-collar and unskilled jobs in the manufacturing sector has not been offset by a proportionate gain of jobs in the service sector. Instead, we see that their significant loss of shares in manufacturing combined with their modest gain in the service sector during the 1980s to make for a very negative picture of their labor force participation rates and levels of unemployment.

III

Earnings

Defined as the sum of wage or salary income and net income from farm and non-farm self-employment received by workers, earnings do not tell us much unless they are compared with prices and against other earnings within a given society. While the analysis of purchasing power and earnings will be addressed in chapter three, this section starts from the questions of how, compared to other groups, Dominicans are doing in terms of earnings. Implicit in that question is the need to assess the value

ascribed to Dominican immigrant workers. The answer to it may bring us closer to understanding the meaning of cheap labor and the place of low wage workers in American society today.

Table 17

Changes in Annual Earnings in New York City, 1979-1989
(Employed persons 16 years of age or older)

Population Group	1979 Earnings (In 1989 \$)	1989 Earnings 1980-1990	% Change
A. MEN			
Dominican	13,982	15,139	8.3%
New York City overall	25,141	28,815	14.6
Non-Hispanic White	28,653	36,272	26.6
Non-Hispanic Black	19,410	20,703	8.2
Hispanic, overall	17,908	18,540	3.5
B. WOMEN			
Dominican	10,007	11,371	13.6%
New York City overall	16,304	20,425	25.3
Non-Hispanic White	17,411	23,521	35.1
Non-Hispanic Black	15,566	18,695	20.1
Hispanic, overall	12,611	14,553	15.4

Source: Same as Table 14

Data on the distribution of earnings show that in 1990 compared to the other ethnic groups in this study, Dominicans had the lowest earnings. Similarly, during the 1980s the earning gap between Dominicans and the highest earners (non-Hispanic whites) became wider. After adjusting for inflation, in 1989 the average annual earnings of Dominican males was \$15,139 while non-Hispanic whites earned \$36,272, non-Hispanic blacks, \$20,707, and Hispanics, \$18,540. As **Table 17** indicates, in 1989 the annual earnings of Dominican males increased modestly, but the earning gap between Dominican males and the non-Hispanic white male workers increased considerably. While in 1989 the average annual earnings of a Dominican male worker increased by \$1,157, the annual earnings of a non-Hispanic white male worker increased by \$7,619, reflecting an earning gap in 1989 of \$21,133 compared to 1979 when the gap had been \$14,671. That is to say that in 1979 Dominican males earned 48.7 cents per every dollar earned by a non-Hispanic white male. In 1989 the distance between the two workers became wider when this earning was reduced to 41.7 cents per dollar.

In 1989 the earning gap between Dominican men and Hispanic men was slightly reduced. In 1979 the average Dominican male earned 78 cents per every dollar earned by the average Hispanic male, and in 1989 that earning increased to 81 cents per every dollar. It should be noted, however, that the reduction of that gap does not correspond to high earning increase for Dominican males but it was due, rather, to the fact that the annual earnings of Hispanic males, compared to the rest of the other male workers, experienced the lowest increase, meaning a change of only 3.5 percent, between 1979 and 1989.

Dominican women on their part exhibit significantly lower annual earnings compared to other women in the city. Relative to non-Hispanic white women, the earnings of Dominican women reflect an even wider gap between 1979 and 1989. After adjusting for inflation, in 1989 the average annual earnings for Dominican women was \$11,371, compared to non-Hispanic white women who on the average earned \$23,521, non-Hispanic black women, \$18,695, and Hispanic women, \$14,553. As Table 5 indicates, in 1989 the average

annual earnings of Dominican women increased modestly from \$10,007 to \$11,371, substantially below those of non-Hispanic white women whose earnings increased from \$17,411 to \$23,521. That is to say that if in 1979 a Dominican woman earned 57.4 cents per every dollar earned by a non-Hispanic white woman, this earning was reduced in 1989 to 48.3 cents.

IV

Labor Force Participation Rates and Unemployment

Labor force participation, defined as the ratio of the active labor force to the total prime working age population, is frequently used to estimate the size and composition of labor reserves. **Table 18** shows labor force participation rates by sex and ethnic/racial origin. In 1990, among the groups compared here, Dominican men had the highest labor force participation rate with 73.1 percent. The corresponding numbers for non-Hispanic white men was 71.1 percent, for non-Hispanic black men, 65.0 percent, and for Hispanic men overall, 70.6 percent. Dominican and Hispanic women had almost similar labor

force participation rates, or 49.1 percent and 49.2 percent respectively. But compared to non-Hispanic white women, who had 53.3 percent, non-Hispanic black women, who had 60.2 percent, and women in general, who had 54.6 percent, Dominican females had significantly lower participation rates in the labor force.

Table 18

**Labor Force Participation Rates
New York City 1980-1990
(Persons 16 years of age or older)**

Population Group	Labor Force Participation Rate (%)			
	Male		Female	
	1980	1990	1980	1990
Dominican	75.6	73.1	47.3	49.1
New York City	70.5	71.8	47.8	54.6
Non-Hispanic White	71.8	72.4	47.5	53.3
Non-Hispanic Black	65.0	67.8	51.9	60.2
Hispanic, overall	70.6	72.6	41.2	49.2

Source: Same as Table 14.

It is important to note that overall during the 1980s the labor force participation rates of Dominican men and women were negatively affected. As indicated in **Table 18** compared to 1980, Dominican men lost shares in 1990.

Among the ethnic groups compared here, in 1990 Dominican males were the only ones who experienced a decline of 2.5 percent in their participation rate in the labor force. The others experienced moderate increases, ranging from 1.3 percent to 2.8 percent. On their part, compared to 1980, Dominican women experienced a slight increase of 1.8 percent in the labor force participation rates, but their increase lagged substantially behind the other women who experienced increases ranging from 5.8 percent for non-Hispanic white women to 8.3 percent for non-Hispanic black women.

In 1980 Dominican women had a higher labor force participation rate (47.3%) than Hispanic women in general (41.2%), but in 1990, due to the disparity in the increases both groups experienced, Hispanic women were able to reduce the gap and slightly surpass Dominican women, moving to 49.2 percent. Similarly, while in 1980

Dominican women almost equaled the labor force participation rates of women overall in the city (47.3 percent for Dominicans and 47.8 percent for NYC women) in 1990 NYC women increased their shares over Dominicans by 5.5 percent.

Table 19 indicates unemployment rates and sex for the various ethnic/racial groups compared here. It shows that

Table 19
Unemployment Rates in New York City
1980-1990
(Persons 16 years of age or older)

Population Group	Unemployment Rate in %			
	Male		Female	
	1980	1990	1980	1990
Dominican	14.3	15.17	9.5	18.4
New York City	7.0	8.7	6.6	8.1
Non-Hispanic White	5.0	5.5	5.1	4.9
Non-Hispanic Black	13.1	14.3	9.9	10.9
Hispanic Overall	14.0	12.4	12.21	13.6

Source: Same as Table 14.

with the exception of Hispanic males, who actually reduced their unemployment rate in 1990 to 12.4 percent, the other males experienced small increases reflecting 5.5 percent for non-Hispanic whites, 8.7 percent for males overall in the city, 14.3 percent for non-Hispanic blacks, and 15.7 for Dominicans. It should be noted, however, that among the male groups, Dominican males exhibited the highest unemployment rates for 1980 as well as for 1990.

With the exception of non-Hispanic white females who experienced a decline in their unemployment rates in 1990, unemployment rates increased for the rest of the women in this study, reflecting 18.4 percent for Dominicans, 8.1 percent for NYC overall, 10.9 for non-Hispanic blacks, and 13.6 percent for Hispanics. Note that while Dominican women almost doubled their unemployment rate from 1980 to 1990, that is from 9.5 percent to 18.4 percent, the other women experienced only slight increases ranging from 1.0 percent for non-Hispanic black to 1.4 percent for New York City Overall women.

During the last two decades the position of Dominican workers in the labor market has decayed progressively. In

1980, for instance, compared to the other racial/ethnic groups, Dominicans had higher or equal labor force participation rates while keeping the highest unemployment levels and the lowest earnings. In 1990, however, their position deteriorated. Now Dominicans not only continued to experience the highest unemployment rates and the lowest earnings, but their labor force participation rate declined. What is interesting is that Dominicans reduced their labor force participation rate precisely at a moment when every other group exhibited an increase in their participation rates.

Looking closely at the situation of Dominicans in the labor market one cannot help but to ask why Dominicans show such poor labor market outcomes with very high unemployment rates, low and dropping labor force participation. One may ponder on whether the problem lies with the workers or with the receiving society.

Explaining Labor Market Differentiations

Several explanations have been offered to account for labor market differences among workers. The explanations

could be divided into two groups: those dealing with the supply and those dealing with the demand. While supply theories focus on the workers, abilities, skills, quantity, as well as demographic factors such as age, marital status, and the like, demand theories focus on the host country's economy, its structural changes, and its needs.³

On the supply-side theories, human capital understood as a set of variables including educational attainment, job experience, training, and skills, has been found to play an important role in establishing labor market differences among workers. In explaining labor market outcomes among immigrants, George Borjas concludes that "When unskilled immigrants enter the labor force, they are likely to have difficulty finding and holding on to a job...Hence low wage or unskilled immigrant groups will have relatively high unemployment rates" (1990:136). In a consequent study of immigrants in the United States, using the Public Use Samples of the U.S. Population Census

³. For a good review of these theories consult Moss and Tilly's *Why Black Men are Doing Worse in the Labor Market: A Review of Supply-Side and Demand-Side Explanations*.

from 1940 to 1980, Borjas (1992) examined levels of skills and found that post-war immigrants, who had poor skill levels and low educational attainment, also had poor labor market outcomes, as reflected in their high unemployment, low earnings, lower labor force participation, and weak attachment to the labor market. On their part, K. McCarthy and R. Burciaga Valdez found that low earnings among Mexican immigrants was connected to their low educational attainment, particularly to their persistent failure to increase the number of college graduates among their Mexican-American generations (1985).

A useful contribution to the human capital debate is that of economist Francisco Rivera-Batiz (1991) who aptly argues that years of schooling alone do not properly explain wage differences among workers. Quality of schooling, for instance, Rivera-Batiz contends, could generate different educational skills. Preferring to examine literacy (academic knowledge in English reading and quantitative skills) he has posited that "The statistical analysis unequivocally suggests that literacy

skills are a major variable explaining wage differentials among Hispanics" (p.71).

On the demand-side, scholars have found that economic structural changes have led to earning differences among workers through the specific creation of less-valued jobs. The shifting of the economy from manufacturing to services, for instance, replaced well-paying and stable blue-collar manufacturing jobs with low-paying blue-collar service jobs. In one of the most clear and coherent statements presented to date about the nature of employment in the United States, Bennett Harrison and Barry Bluestone have shown that economic restructuring combined with government policies have pushed this country into a "great U turn" in which "The decade of the 1980s...bore a credible resemblance to the 1920s" (Harrison & Bluestone 1988:viii). The authors state that since the 1960s the United States has turned into a service society characterized by growing poverty, too few good-paying jobs, and an abundance of jobs of "dubious quality" (ibid).

An important variable among demand-side theories is the geographical location of workers and job growth. Residential patterns, for instance, have been found to have an effect in labor market outcomes of blacks. John Kasarda's (1983;1990) well-known studies on employment and blacks claim that in some metropolitan cities economic restructuring produced a mismatch between jobs and black workers. High rates of joblessness, earnings decline, and poverty among blacks corresponded to the fact that blacks workers, though needing entry-level and low educational level jobs, resided in urban areas where these jobs were being replaced by jobs demanding higher educational level. At the same time, jobs that required low educational levels were growing in the suburbs and exurbs, but they were geographically removed from the urban centers where unskilled black workers were concentrated.

Explaining Poor Labor Market Outcomes Among Dominicans

Most of the discussion presented above could partially explain poor labor market outcomes among Dominican workers. There is evidence that Dominicans have

low educational attainment, high proportions of blue-collar and unskilled workers, and limited English proficiency. They also tend to reside almost exclusively in urban areas.

The under-representation of Dominicans in upper white-collar occupations is connected to their low educational attainment. Similarly, their limited English proficiency (LEP) affects their likelihood to move to middle and low white-collar occupations as well as to the public sector. **Table 20**, for instance, presents the educational levels of Dominicans in New York City, compared to the other ethnic groups examined here as well as the overall population of the city. It shows that Dominicans had the highest proportion of persons 25 years of age or older who had not completed high school. In 1990, 52.3 percent of Dominicans 25 years of age or older had completed less than high school. The corresponding number for the overall population of New York City was 20.8 percent, for non-Hispanic whites 11.7 percent, for non-Hispanic blacks 24.9 percent, and for Hispanics 40.4 percent. On the other hand, among the groups compared, Dominicans had the smallest representation among people

Table 20

**The Educational Status of the Population in New York City
1990**
(Persons 25 years of age or older)

Percentage of the Population Completing:				
Population Group	Less than High School	High School	Some College	College or More
Dominican	52.3%	20.4%	19.3%	8.0%
New York City	20.8	24.8	24.5	29.9
Non-HW	11.7	23.2	23.5	41.6
Non-HB	24.9	29.9	29.6	15.6
Hispanic	40.4	25.6	23.1	10.9

Source: Same as Table 14.

25 years of age or older who had completed college or more. Only 8.0 percent of Dominicans had completed college or more, compared to 29.9 percent for the overall population of the city, 41.6 percent for non-Hispanic whites, 15.6 percent of non-Hispanic blacks, and 10.9 percent of Hispanics.

As indicated in **Table 21**, during the 1980s foreign

born-Dominicans made significant progress in their educational levels. In 1980 a total of 72.0 percent of Dominicans 25 years of age or older had less than high school. In 1990, this total was reduced to 52.2 percent. In contrast, U.S.-born Dominicans of similar

Table 21

**Changes in Educational Attainment of U.S.-Born
and Immigrant Dominicans
1990
(Persons 25 years of age or older)**

Percentage of the Population Completing:				
Population Group		Less than High School	High School or Some College	College or More
Dominican Immigrants	1980	72.7	23.8	3.5
	1990	54.3	38.2	7.5
U.S.-Born Dominicans	1980	35.0	48.3	16.7
	1990	30.6	57.2	12.2

Source: Same as Table 14.

characteristics were less fortunate, experiencing a moderate drop from 35.0 percent to 30.6 percent.

Similarly, foreign-born Dominicans more than doubled the total of those who had completed college or more, from 3.5 percent to 7.5 percent but U.S.- born Dominicans experienced a decline in this category, from 16.7 percent to 12.2 percent.

The educational progress experienced by foreign-born Dominicans, reflected in an increase in the years of schooling, is associated with the constant influx of immigrants coming from the Dominican Republic which accelerated during the 1980s, reflecting a more diverse demographic profile. In 1970, for instance, 16.8 percent of Dominicans admitted to the U.S. reported upper, intermediate and low skilled white-collar occupations. But for those admitted from 1982 to 1989, these occupations represented a total of 24.7 percent.⁴ Yet, years of schooling, as Rivera-Batiz has argued, have been offset by the low levels of English literacy among foreign born

⁴. Figure for 1970 are from 1970 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Figure for 1982-1989 are from The Newest New Yorkers: A Statistical Portrait. 1970 classification of occupations differ slightly from 1980.

Dominicans, who in 1990, as much as 47.3 percent were unable to speak English or spoke it poorly (see **graph 7**). U.S.-born Dominicans, on the other hand, represent a young population whose low educational outcomes result from increasing high rates of school dropouts and other related problems affecting their school districts.⁵

It is likely that residential patterns may have also affected labor market outcomes among Dominican workers. As indicated previously, the overwhelming majority of Dominicans reside in New York City. Although since the 1970s, the number of Dominicans settling in New York City has steadily declined, in 1990, a solid 65.1 percent of the total Dominicans residing in the United States, claimed this city as their home. On the other hand, job growth, particularly blue-collar and low-skilled service jobs, was highest in the suburbs and their intermediate and outer areas, which are distant from Dominican settlements. "Between 1978 and 1989, for example, employment in grocery retailing in New York and New Jersey suburbs increased by 25 percent. But in New York's outer

⁵. This issue is further elaborated in the two following chapters.

boroughs it increased by less than 1 percent" (O'Neill and Moss 1991:57). Similarly, while wholesale employment in Manhattan, for instance, experienced an absolute loss of 27,300 jobs, the outer ring suburbs, had an absolute gain of 28,100 wholesale jobs (ibid:52). The fact that over 20 percent of Dominican homes did not own a telephone in 1990 and that public transportation to and from these regions is expensive, contributed to isolate Dominicans further.

The shifting of the economy from manufacturing to service and the increasing loss of good paying blue-collar, unskilled jobs, had a devastating effect on Dominican immigrants who are mostly unskilled, blue-collar workers. During the 1980s, for instance, among all the Caribbean nations, the Dominican Republic, had the highest proportion of unskilled, blue-collar workers admitted to New York City. From 1982 to 1989, 36.6 percent of those Dominicans were specifically classified as operators, fabricators, and laborers. The corresponding proportion for the entire Caribbean region, excluding the Dominican

Republic, was 21.4 percent.⁶

The Variation of Labor Force Participation Among Dominicans

Labor force participation among Dominicans was relatively high during the 1970s due perhaps to the volume of their migration and the momentary need for workers caused by the socio-economic change taking place in the manufacturing sector. For instance, there is great variation in the mean annual admission of immigrants from the Dominican Republic from 1966 to 1985: 12,579 in the first decade ('66 to '75) and 18,316 in the second ('76 to '85). Their increasing and constant migration, combined with the arrival of other groups who were attracted to the same job market, could lead to a state of saturation, particularly in a market that is the product

⁶. Immigrants are classified according to the last job held in the sending country or according to the occupation they have been trained for. Source: author's own tabulation from *The Newest New Yorkers: A Statistical Portray* . Pp.69-70.

of a volatile moment of economic restructuring. That demographic dynamic could also lead to labor substitution.⁷

Regarding labor substitution and industrial restructuring, Torres and Bonilla argue that the reorganization of industrial production into light manufacturing during the 1970s led, once again, to the displacement of Puerto Rican workers. The re-composed manufacturing sector in New York City was reorganized on the basis of a reduction of the cost of production, particularly labor. New immigrants, unskilled and desperate to work, became the ideal labor force for the sector (1993:101). Economic transformations, particularly those caused by the need to reduce the cost of production, lead to relative shortage of labor. In this case then, it is not that workers willingly withdraw from the labor

⁷. For a detailed analysis of new immigrants in the labor market, consult Pereira et al: *Labor Force Participation, Occupations and Wages Among New York City Residents: A Comparison of Latinos and Non-Latinos*. Pereira et al's report indicates that Dominicans, Colombians and Ecuadorians tend to occupy the same blue-collar/unskilled job markets in the city. Also, *The Newest New Yorkers: An Analysis of Immigration into New York City During the 1980s* and Waldinger in *Through the Eye of the Needle: Immigrants and Enterprise in New York's Garment Trades* list Chinese workers in the same labor markets.

market, rather, as argued by Torres and Bonilla, they are simply rejected and substituted by the process of production.

Similarly, the process of re-organization of manufacturing production, as with any other productive change, involved a number of transitional stages (from definition and technological changes to market orientation) and attracted a good number of new workers without implying a permanent commitment to them. What kind of commitment to the workers there would be would become clear in the process, particularly as permitted by the elasticity of the demand once the new markets were stable in place.

Once the new markets became relatively stable, the elasticity of their demand began to be affected as was reflected in their constant drop in the number of people employed or in their anemic growth. Take, for instance, the manufacturing sector. As **graph 6** shows, the number of jobs in this sector has fallen precipitously since the 1960s without adding one solid job. That is to say that the development of new manufacturing jobs (regardless of

their conditions, i.e. downgraded or low-paid) has occurred within a shrinking process, which, to this moment, seems to be irreversible. Similarly, as the graph shows, in spite of its remarkable expansion, the growth of service jobs has not been evenly distributed within the service sector. From 1960 to 1990 the growth of jobs in retail trade, for instance, has been negative, declining from 12.19 percent to 10.80 percent. The dynamic areas of the service industries (i.e. FIRE), forced by global competition experienced profound changes, including downsizing, mergers and acquisitions, resulting in large labor cuts. At the national level, for instance, between 1980 and 1987, the Fortune 500 companies reduced their labor force by 3.1 million jobs (Christesen et al 1990).

The direct reduction of jobs, particularly of high-paying jobs within the FIRE industries, had to have a negative impact in those jobs, whether formal or informal, that had developed to satisfy the needs and specificities of a high-paying clientele. Job reduction, besides limiting the multiplying effects of high-income jobs, the re-organization of labor, particularly in small firms in

New York City, has led also to further reduction in the use of labor. In fact, in a recent study of contingent workers, small and medium-size firms in New York City, it was found that 98 percent of all firms in the city had less than 100 workers and that 31 percent of them worked specifically in manufacturing, business, and financial services. More importantly, the study found that many of these firms seeking to reduce the cost of production, were planning to move their production elsewhere. Regarding the use of labor in the city the authors conclude that "The number of core, permanent employees in many firms is shrinking...The smaller the firms the more likely they are to use contingent staffing as a powerful lever to maximize profits" (Christesen et al 1994:44).

Expanding Demand-Side Theories

Traditionally, migrant workers have been understood as an exodus of surplus labor that moves to areas that are expected to offer employment opportunities. Since they moved in search of employment, it seemed inconceivable that they, job-seekers by their very nature, would

consciously invest time or money in a journey that promised no reward. Yet, recently some scholars have begun to note that modern societies, particularly those with high immigrant flows, have witnessed a growing disparity between jobs and job-seekers. The disparity, normally associated with specific job markets and workers within a given economy, is being increasingly understood as a structural tendency that affects all kinds of wage-workers regardless of their human capital stock, position in the labor market, or nativity. Thus, the pool of unused workers increases through direct unemployment resulting from increasing lay-offs and/or the adding of new job-seekers who are unable to find employment, as well as through a fall in the labor force resulting from discouraged workers and/or potential workers who are absorbed at educational centers.⁸

In *Beyond Employment: Time, Work, and the Informal Economy* Claus Offe and Rolf Heinze (1992) argue that in advanced societies wage-work is turning more and more into a precious stone that fewer people possess. Increasing

⁸. The theoretical explanations for this section are elaborated in Chapter 4.

unemployment levels, they argue, show us "that 'being employed' is not really the normal state of affairs; people only think it is" (Offe and Heize 1992:1). Instead, "the normal state of affairs" is growing unemployment, part-time work, shorter weeks, multi earner households, and an informal economy.

The rise of the service economy has been generally understood as a job market capable of absorbing a growing labor force. It was widely accepted that services generated a variety of highly skilled, low-skilled, white-collar, and blue-collar jobs. Unlike modern manufacturing, service industries are relatively labor-intensive, or require a greater use of labor relative to capital resources. But the service economy has been severely criticized for its inability to produce good-paying jobs to replace long-gone old manufacturing jobs, by its propensity to create systematic economic slowdowns through increasing the cost of labor (through enhancing human capital) without increasing its productivity, but more importantly, and most crucial to our argument, by its

incapacity to produce enough jobs as to satisfy the employment needs of a growing labor force.

In *The Jobless Future: Sci-Tech and the Dogma of Work* Sociologists Stanley Aronowitz and Willian DiFazio (1994) present the problem of lack of enough jobs as pervasive in modern capitalist society. They argue that the United States is characterized today by a productive process which increasingly displaces workers and generates unemployment, underemployment, and low paying jobs. The authors argue against the belief that displaced workers in advanced societies were somehow re-incorporated into the process of production, and that semi-skilled and highly skilled workers were protected from facing replacement and unemployment in the labor process (Aronowitz and DiFazio 1994:326-27). They point that "All of the contradictory tendencies involved in the restructuring of global capital and computer-mediated work seem to lead to the same conclusion for workers of all collars- that is unemployment, underemployment, decreasingly skilled work, and relatively lower wages. These sci-tech transformations of the labor process have disrupted the

workplace and workers' community and culture. The new technology will destroy more jobs than it creates. The new technology has fewer parts and fewer workers and produces more products. This is true not only in traditional production industries but for all workers, including managers and technical workers" (p.3).

Today capitalists have found new ways to accumulate without increasing their use of living labor, thereby contributing to augment the labor reserve. Harry Magdoff complained about the lack of discussion concerning the working class in a world more and more controlled by competition, less commodity production, and particularly, growing accumulation through financial transactions involving international banks. He felt that investors were moving freely in search of lower wages, and that "Factories that decide not to move will be motivated to reduce labor cost by modernization that will eliminate jobs. Both of these developments create a real threat to the working classes of nations already burdened by mass unemployment" (1989:360).

Offe and Heinze (1992) explain, for instance,

that today more and more consumers are falling into what they call "Do It Yourself," (DIY) or the tendency to perform activities ranging from wood or metal products to repair and maintenance services. The authors conclude that the basic idea behind DIY is simply to save money by using one's own energy and knowledge, rather than buying them from someone else. A tendency that we have witnessed in New York City is that consumers can presumably lower the price of a given product by buying it unassembled and carrying it home. As a result, consumers are no longer merely consumers at a given moment in time. Now they may simultaneously be consumers, non-wage delivery people, and non-wage assemblers. In the transformation process, however, at least two workers have been directly displaced.

It is interesting to note that although retail sales in New York City, after being stagnated since 1988, increased by 2.9 percent in 1994, but that the growth did not translate into job gains in the sector. While employment grew by 1.9 percent in eating and drinking establishments, mostly as a result of increases in the

number of tourists, in general merchandise stores, where today more and more unassembled products are being sold, particularly furniture, employment fell by 8.3 percent, affecting the net total of any job-growth in the retail sector (McCall and Scanlon 1995:27-8).

In a recent study on employment in fast-food establishments in central Harlem conducted by a team from Columbia University, it was found that "Inner-city fast-food jobs have become the object of fierce competition. The ratio of job applicants to hires is about 14 to 1....Jobs once considered solely the province of high school drop-outs or young people starting out in the work world are now dominated by workers in their mid- and late 20s who are trying to support families on \$4.25 an hour-\$170 a week" (Newman 1995:23).

If, as the authors have shown, the tendency has been to reduce the use of labor in every economic job market, how can we insist that current migration flows to the United States from the Dominican Republic or anywhere else for that matter, respond to the need for workers in the host society? The answer to this question is not in a

hidden demand for labor in some underground new markets whose elasticity knows no limits. On the contrary, increasing attacks against immigrants emanating from various quarters from government to sectors of civil society, clearly indicate that new foreign hands, particularly poor and unskilled, are no longer either needed or wanted here. The continued influx of immigrants to the United States does not necessarily respond to a need of the receiving society. As explained in Chapter I, it could more conceivably respond to the needs of the sending society and, ultimately, to the needs of the migrants themselves.

Chapter III

DOMINICANS: THE PERCEPTION OF A MIGRATORY MOVEMENT

Since the early 1960s, as we have seen above, the number of Dominicans arriving legally in the U.S. has steadily increased. Scholars associate this increasing influx with the possibility Dominicans have of improving their material conditions in the receiving society, particularly through employment opportunities. Among the early researchers, Nancie L. González highlighted the way immigrant peasant Dominicans are integrated into the labor market of the host country. She explained that once in New York, it was not difficult for Dominicans to find jobs as waiters, cooks, dishwashers, salad men, longshoremen, garment workers, busboys, and the like. Perceiving migration as response to a demand for laborers, she affirmed that "These are the kinds of jobs which for some time have fallen to minority groups in New York. Puerto Ricans have been employed in these capacities in recent years, and we see a future trend in which Dominicans replace the former as they improve their economic and social status, intermarry with other Americans and lose

their ethnic identity, or return to Puerto Rico" (González 1970:161-2).

González also sustained that uprooted Dominican peasants had a better chance of improving their lives in a large metropolitan and modern city, like New York, than in a small one such as Santo Domingo. She differentiated the options in the two urban settings by saying that "It may be that the structure of the very large metropolis permits ... a kind of protective pluralism which the smaller city cannot. Individuals, depending upon their previous life circumstances, may then fit into one of several kinds of urban living patterns. Thus, the peasant in cities like New York may survive very well using the techniques and social structures with which he grew up back in the Dominican Republic" (1970:170). In her view, Dominican peasants were able to adapt to the new city because they were equipped with what she identifies as "techniques and social structures," abilities to which the new city was receptive through its plurality.

Like González, Glenn Hendricks (1974) too emphasized the relative facility with which Dominicans found jobs once in New York City. Hendricks noted that prior to

their arrival in the city many Dominicans had already jobs waiting for them. These jobs had been secured by the networks of friends or relatives already established in the receiving society, which eased the process of integration of the newcomers. At the time it was so easy to find work that, as Hendricks explains, Dominicans who wanted to return home for some time could do so without the fear of losing their current jobs. To illustrate his point the author tells us the story of two cousins, Fabio and Rodolfo, who came together to New York and soon found jobs as helpers in the kitchen of a Hungarian restaurant. After a year, the chef taught the two cousins to cook and made them his assistants. When Fabio and Rodolfo decided to go home to visit their relatives, the owners gave them the option of leaving and coming back as dishwashers or staying until the closing of the restaurant for vacation so they could keep their positions as cooks. Fabio stayed but his cousin Rodolfo went home. As a result, two months later when Rodolfo returned he had to settle for the less remunerative job as dishwasher (Hendricks 1974:145).

In the same vein, the bulk of the literature on Dominican migration published after 1979 suggests that

once in the receiving society, Dominican immigrants have no trouble finding work. While González believed that the demand for low-skilled workers resulted from the upward social mobility of minority workers, most subsequent scholars have felt that the need for low-skilled labor in the manufacturing sector, for instance, had resulted from the employment ... vacated by retiring White workers as well as from the re-structured economy of the city. One gathers from the literature that the availability of jobs has to do with structural conditions and that the network system Dominicans rely on as Hendricks had reported, simply facilitates the recruitment of workers from a given ethnicity.

Sherri Grasmuck and Patricia Pessar have voiced a perception that typifies the prevalent wisdom in the post 1979 scholarship. They state that "The exodus of whites has caused an ethnic realignment in the city ... As the non-white population replaced whites, the former began to specialize in distinct economic spaces. Immigrants realized gains in every New York City industry, but they came to be heavily over represented in the declining manufacturing sector. This was especially the case for

Hispanic immigrants... Self-employment, especially in firms that cater to immigrant clients, is also often an important part of the immigrant settlement process in places where immigrants abound" (Grasmuck and Pessar 1991:166-8).

An examination of self-employment among Dominicans residing in New York City was tackled, first, by Roger Waldinger (1986), to be followed later by Alejandro Portes and Luis E. Guarnizo (1990). These authors believe that self-employment among immigrants comes as a direct response to dead-end and low-paying jobs in the receiving society. Waldinger explains the entrance of Dominicans into the manufacturing business as the result of the city's economic restructuring, the relocation of capital, particularly in manufacturing, and the exodus of Italian and Jewish owners from the garment business. Portes and Guarnizo, on the other hand, explain the development of Dominican entrepreneurship in New York City from the perspective of the enclave economy. The enclave economy, as defined by Portes and Bach in an earlier study of Cuban and Mexican immigration in the United States (1985), refers to a conglomerate of firms of any size owned and

managed by members of a differentiated cultural or national minority.

But besides the facility with which Dominicans presumably find jobs in the receiving society, the literature implies that employment, either in the secondary job market or in the ethnic enclave, allows these immigrants the opportunities for social mobility. The implication concerning social mobility is two-fold. First, some scholars undertake to assess the socio-economic status of Dominicans in the immigrant abode by contrast to their former condition in the native land. Thus, compared to things back home, Dominican migrants appear to have moved up in the receiving society.¹ Secondly, many scholars place emphasis on the upward move of the immigrant households in the native land through the invaluable remittances they send to their relatives or the investments they make in the homeland.

In examining the role of international migration in raising the standard of living in the migrant's household

¹. See for instance the works of Nancie L. Gonz  lez and Glenn Hendricks cited here.

in the native land, Eugenia George, for instance, has noted that although remittances from males living abroad stress the social subordination of women, they also help to improve the women's socio-economic position. The author explains that "women who headed migrant households in Los Pinos were less likely to work for pay than nonimmigrant women. [In the Dominican Republic] The fact that they did not need to perform remunerated work was a sign of status" (George 1990:244).

The works of Portes and Guarnizo (1990) and Grasmuck and Pessar (1991) make reference to the socio-economic conditions of Dominican migrants within the context of the host country. As its title indicates, *Tropical Capitalists* proposes the upward social mobility of Dominicans in the receiving society through the development of an ethnic entrepreneurial sector. The business sector, conceived initially to satisfy the needs of immigrants, soon becomes a source of employment that compensates for the dead-end and the low-paid jobs in the secondary labor market. In explaining the functions of the enclave, Portes and Guarnizo conclude that "Patterns of social interaction within the immigrant community

create opportunities that, if not available to every one or in equal measure, offer to many a means of escaping the drudgery and stagnation of jobs in the secondary sector" (Portes and Guarnizo 1990:113). In addition, the authors contend that the accumulation of capital resources, business knowledge, and skills in the U.S. among Dominican entrepreneurs has spread over to the Dominican Republic, where a capitalist sector with strong ties to the Dominican enclave in the U.S. has developed.

Grasmuck and Pessar approached carefully the issue of social mobility among Dominicans residing in New York City. They privileged the interpretation of the migrants themselves as they spoke about their social status. In examining the responses of Dominican informants in New York City concerning their social class, the authors conclude that "The majority of our ethnographic informants, undocumented and women included -68 of 100 informants-declare themselves to be middle class" (Grasmuck and Pessar 1991:195). The authors, appropriately mystified about such-self classification, the vast majority of whom had dead-end, low-paying, blue-collar jobs, explain their informants' odd answers by

arguing that Dominican immigrants tended to measure and qualify their immediate surroundings according to values and standards current in the Dominican Republic.

The authors believe that their informants' behavior reflected a dual state of mind caused by the immigrant experience. They reason that "The fact that the majority of our informants identified themselves as middle-class and drew on Dominican-based referents in arriving at this self-attribution is emblematic of the fact that Dominicans do indeed remain between two islands. On the one hand, they embrace U.S.-manufactured items of consumption, transmogrified into Dominican models of consumption and standing, to shield themselves from a more objective, or at least U.S.-centered, measure of their class position in New York" (p.196-7).

In spite of what Dominican women may perceive as their class status, Grasmuck and Pessar's study suggests that migration and employment have granted to most of their Dominican informants membership into the working class of the receiving society. The same study suggests, however, that for Dominicans residing in the native land the effects of out-migration differ notably.

The authors contend that emigration abroad has enabled many middle-class Dominicans in the home land to realize their class position. In other words, "Dominican-out migration has become a strategy of income accumulation for middle-class or aspiring middle-class households that cannot solidify their class position within the confines of the Dominican national economy" (p.201). Moreover, "the very visible housing developments that are associated in the minds of most with New York money support the premise that returnees have established solid middle-class life-styles in the Dominican Republic. Indeed, interviews with several Dominican bankers confirmed the fact that the great bulk of home mortgages in the Dominican Republic since the early 1980s have been granted to return migrants" (p.86).

The majority of the migrant households interviewed by Grasmuck and Pessar derived most or all of their income from U.S. sources, which clearly revealed a high state of economic dependence on the part of these homes. The authors conjectured that the economic dependence of these homes would not disappear in the near future (p.87). Despite the fragility of their middle-class status, the

authors feel that in the end, through migration to the United States, Dominicans in the Island do accomplish their aspirations of social class mobility: "If we look at migration from the perspective of the migrant's stated intention of social mobility, then we must conclude that the migrants and their household members in the Dominican Republic have by and large been successful" (p.95).

Middle class Dominicans residing in migrant households sustain their class status by remaining attached to the United States. They draw on the resources secured by members of the household who emigrate abroad and seek temporary employment. Middle class Dominicans who endeavor to find temporary employment in the U.S. in order to maintain their life style in the native country seem to enter a process of *circulating migration*, a term applied by Bonilla and Campos (1981) to the constant movement of surplus laborers who, during time of economic downs and high unemployment levels, moved back-and-forth between Puerto Rico and the United States. But while the evaluation of "middle class" Dominican migrants in the homeland may lead one to take them for "circular migrants", or surplus workers who are pressed to move from

place to place, the study by Grasmuck and Pessar shows the status of U.S. Dominican immigrants as bona fide members of the working class of the receiving society.

Pessar, the most prolific Dominican migration scholar in the U.S. had already addressed the question of the standard of living among Dominican women residing in New York City. Hers is a pioneering attempt to grasp the reality of living conditions for Dominicans in the city. Her ethnographic study, conducted in New York City, surveyed 55 Dominican households and 16 garment working women. The households were classified as poor and middle class. The author found that "pooled household, rather than individual, income enables many of the Dominican garment workers to maintain what they perceive is a middle-class standard of living" (Pessar 1987:112). The middle-class households in question were likely to have low ratio of dependency and more than one-wage earner. Poor households, in contrast, normally showed a high ratio of dependency and fewer wage-earners. In addition, middle-class households were found to have a "better diet, housing, furniture, and use of leisure time" than poor households.

Pessar's study reveals the co-existence of two different social classes among Dominicans residing in New York City. Some women viewed themselves as part of the middle-class while others thought of themselves as poor. The author's own view on class differences among her informants can only be inferred from the values she assigns to the physical surroundings and material conditions of the two types of households included in her sample. Otherwise, her study privileges the self-classification of the informants themselves who were asked to name their social class. Pessar rightly observes that the perception of themselves as middle-class negatively affected her informants' behavior in the workplace: "this identification and satisfaction with improvement in lifestyle dampen the collective sentiments and solidarity that are potentially nurtured and ignited in the workplace" (p.113). However, the study does not show how the poor women's self-classification and self-perception affected their actions within the larger society.

Similarly, the fact that some of the interviewees classified themselves as poor after migration raises the question of exactly what benefit it is that emigration has

brought them. Perhaps these women have remained in the host country for lack of incentives to return to the native home. It would be useful to establish how they fare in comparison with other poor women in the United States, that is, whether they are doing better or worse than the other women who were officially classified as poor in New York City.

Women whose households depended on *income pooling* and who tended to classify themselves as part of the middle-class probably would attest to a different class status if questioned beyond their ways of enhancing their ability to spend. One could also problematize their self-classification as middle-class by eliciting an articulation of their self-perception based not on their class background in their native country, but rather on their current position in the host country (p.112).

Income pooling enhances the living conditions of those households where the strategy is practiced, but only a comparative approach can tell us whether it serves among Dominican households the same functions as in the homes of poor families. *Income pooling* is a budgetary strategy commonly associated with poor working people who earn low

wages, suffer high unemployment levels, and cannot separately satisfy the basic consumption needs of a single family. In that sense, *income pooling* hides the decreasing value of labor, and the overexploitation of workers.

Pessar's study seems to suggest that *income pooling* and the ability to measure their standard of living by reference to their native country gave Dominican women a class identity which would have been otherwise impossible for them to acquire through the benefits derived from a single-wage-earner and an evaluation of themselves according to the socio-economic standards of the receiving country. They possess, then, a false sense of class identity. Besides, the women in Pessar's study, by virtue of their occupations, earnings, and living conditions were far removed from the indicators one commonly associates with the middle-class. The discussion of the availability of jobs for Dominicans in the receiving society and the direct association of Dominicans' upward social mobility in the immigrant abode or the native land with emigration to the U.S., leads to the conclusion that migration to the U.S. has been a wise decision for

Dominicans. On the one hand, the readings generate the understanding that Dominicans have escaped from a developing society characterized by rampant unemployment, low-paying jobs, and wide-spread poverty. But yet more important is the notion that Dominican society cannot provide its people with the opportunity for social mobility or for fulfilling the aspirations of the middle-class. The underlaying assumption is that Dominicans have moved to a modern society where their dreams of socio-economic progress can be materialized.

In its broadest sense this assumption is indirectly supported by the lack of sufficient information on the living conditions of Dominicans in the receiving society. One can also argue that the assumption is sustained by the works of writers who celebrate, for instance, the benefits of self-employment among Dominicans, without measuring its rate of failure and other negative sides. There are those who describe the ease with which Dominicans find jobs tailored to their specific needs and desires, or who measure the extent to which Dominican women have used their ingenuity and strength to raise the living standards of their households in the receiving society.

Moreover, the well-documented reality that the majority of Dominican migrants find dead-end, low-paying, and undesirable blue-collar jobs, not to mention unemployment, is somehow lost to the minds of the readers who are informed by constant reference to the precarious living conditions in the homeland, without the benefit of comparable information about the often dismal conditions that Dominicans encounter in the receiving society. There exists a serious lack of data concerning Dominicans as settled people, who are involved in daily tasks and multiple responsibilities in the immigrant place where they now live. In the meantime, while lack of information helps to validate the widely accepted assumption that views migration to the United States as a wise move on the part of the Dominican people, questions concerning the living status of Dominicans in the host country remain unanswered. We still need to know whether Dominicans, as an immigrant group, after 25 years of a massive and continuous migratory movement to the U.S., have been able to surpass the socio-economic levels generally attributed to new arrivals in the receiving society.

The information about Dominicans as immigrants is scarce or casually presented. We have also found a high degree of selectivity in the information that is brought to the fore. Who they are and what they want as an immigrant community, for instance, generally stay outside the scope of most Dominican migration scholarship. The reader normally encounters, instead, a systematic discussion of Dominicans as unsettled transients, and as people who are deeply submerged in the constant happenings in their native land.

Dominicans presumably do not vote; they remain aloof to politics in the United States. They want to go home, we are constantly told. There are those, for instance, who have associated this presumed urgency among Dominicans to go back home with their inability to perform in the difficult world of immigrant business. Among them is Waldinger who believes that transience has prevented Dominican small garment factory owners from achieving the same level of success as the Chinese who are in the same line of business (Waldinger 1986:182-3). Hendricks, on his part, argued that Dominicans intentionally chose jobs which allowed them to travel back home for long periods of

time. In other words, Dominicans privilege their desire to move back and forth over their need to work for a living. Hendricks explained that one of the reasons why Dominicans chose to work in the garment industry is the industry's long periods of inactivity during season changes, particularly during the Summer, which allowed them to go home without the risk of losing their jobs (Hendricks 1974:144). Hendricks's construed a situation of forced unemployment and underemployment, which confines low-paid workers to much insecurity, into a situation that is actually welcomed by Dominicans.

The point here is not to suggest a theory of conspiracy against Dominican migrants in the receiving society. Nor do researchers deliberately conceal information to create a partial picture of Dominicans in the United States. What we want to point out, rather, is that, regardless of the intentions, a partial picture of Dominican migrants exists and that information about them is unbalanced. The selection of the information and the manner in which this has been presented have given way to a lineal and uncomplicated perception about Dominican migrants. They are perceived as people who have

benefitted from migrating to the United States, who have managed to enhance their socio-economic position in the homeland as well as in the receiving society.

But, the fact is that the ramifications of Dominican migration touch on a lot more than its consequence for the sending society. Dominican migration has generated aspects that are being captured by emerging diasporic voices such as that of the young Dominican fiction writer Junot Díaz, whose stories communicate scenes of "the break-apart buildings, the little strips of grass, the piles of garbage around the cans and the dump-especially the dump" in Dominican neighborhoods. Díaz creates characters with an awareness of their diet, including the "government cheese" they eat; narrators who speak of Dominican mothers who, despite their Amazon qualities having "traveled to the East and learned many secret things," despite their resemblance to "shadow warrior[s]", settled for cleaning houses, learning to live without husbands, and ingeniously stretching the budget to clothe the children (Díaz 1996).

In the section that follows I attempt to continue filling the gap on Dominican migrants in the receiving

society. The idea is to bring the discussion to a level in which one can begin to imagine Dominicans as migrants who lose their temporary identity, their "bird of passage" image and become people who settle and form communities in the receiving society. As such, the emphasis is no longer what they do back home, nor what migration means for their relatives in their native land. That some of them return and that many more wish they could return home can hardly suffice to show the ways in which Dominicans continue to live, give birth, die, bury their dead, and struggle to survive in the new land. The emphasis should then be placed on who Dominicans are, how they live, and where they want to go within the immigrant abode. The section will attempt to understand the community within the context of the receiving society, focusing on their relations to others. Hopefully, this way we will be able to understand the limitations and the possibilities of people who ought to compete for social space within an arena that has no tradition of sharing. The idea is then to perceive Dominicans as people who consciously or unconsciously are engaged in the daily task of building permanent homes far away from the land of their original

ancestors.

The section will survey the living conditions of Dominican immigrants, taking a look at poverty rates, household and family compositions. The section will close with a discussion of life in the Dominican neighborhood of Washington Heights/Inwood, with particular attention to social problems such as violence and the overall precariousness of the area.

I

"Working But Poor"

As we have previously discussed, in 1990, 73.1% of the Dominican men and 49.1% of the women 16 years of age or older were active in the labor force. However, their relatively high labor force participation rates did not exempt them from being poor or from falling under the poverty line in New York City.² The poverty line, an

². It should be noted that when compared with other recent immigrant groups such as Colombians, Ecuadorians, and Asians, Dominicans tend to exhibit considerably lower labor force participation rates in every age group. Similarly, Pereira et al (1994) found that in 1990 native born Dominicans had the lowest labor force participation rate compared to other 7 native born groups.

official measure of poverty provided by the federal government, refers to a minimum level of subsistence below which life becomes threatened. The definition is based on the amount of cash income received by a family before taxes.³ Contrary to household income, poverty rates take into account family size, thus reflecting a fuller picture of economic distress among a given group.

From 1980 to 1990, compared to the New York City Average, non-Hispanic Whites, non-Hispanic Blacks, and Hispanic Overall, Dominicans had the highest poverty rate or 36.6%, as reflected in **Table 22**. Moreover, in both census years, the data show that Dominicans had the highest poverty rate among the groups compared. One should also note that while from 1980 to 1990 the poverty

³. Acknowledging the long-standing debate among social scientists, particularly sociologists, on the difficulty of agreeing on an operational definition of social poverty, I decided to use the definition provided by the federal government. Some have argued that the poverty line is not an accurate indication of the number of poor people because it does not take into account differences in geographical consumer prices or some particular expenses paid by consumers from their own pockets (such as taxes, child care costs, medical bills). They propose that a more accurate definition would be based on a family's disposable income, or the amount left after such family has paid taxes and other basic expenses.

rate decreased for the other ethnic groups compared here, it slightly increased for Dominicans from 36.0% to 36.6%. Similarly, in both census years, Dominicans experienced poverty rates which were over four times higher than the rate for non-Hispanic Whites, the

Table 22

Poverty Rate in New York City, 1980-1990

Population Groups	Poverty Rate in %	
	1980	1990
Dominican population	36.0	36.6
New York City Average	18.0	17.2
Non-Hispanic Whites	8.7	8.2
Non-Hispanic Blacks	28.3	22.9
Hispanic Population Overall	35.0	31.4

Source: Same as Table 14.

ethnic group with the lowest poverty rate in the city. The difference between poverty rates of Dominicans and Hispanics Overall, the two poorest groups in the study, became further accentuated as the former slightly increased its poverty rate while the latter managed to reduce it by almost 4 percent.

Further examination of poverty among different types of families in the major Hispanic groups in the city reveals that Dominicans continue to show most dismal figures. The comparison of Dominican married-couples with Puerto Rican, Colombian, and Ecuadorian ones shows that while in 1990 Dominican couples experienced a poverty rate of 20.8%, the other couples exhibited rates of 14.5%, 9.4%, and 12.2% respectively as indicated in **Table 23**.

Families headed by a single parent tend to have lower incomes than those headed by married-couples whose income may likely come from multiple earners. **Table 23** also contains a breakdown of poverty rates for female-headed families, defined here as families with a female householder and no spouse present. This table shows that Dominican female-headed families were worse off than their Latino counterparts, with 59% poverty rate, followed very closely by 58% among Puerto Rican female-headed families.

Ecuadorians and Colombian female-headed families showed rates of 40 and 28% respectively.

Table 23
Family Type and Poverty Rate
(in %)

Population Groups	Married-Couple	Poverty Rate	Female-Headed	Poverty Rate	
Dominicans	38.1	20.8	40.2	58.5	
Puerto Ricans	33.8	14.5	36.0	57.9	
Colombians	46.9	9.4	20.3	27.5	
Ecuadorians	53.8	12.2	12 .9	39.6	Ra

Source: 1990 Public Use Microdata Census Sample A.

The persistent high rate of poverty among Dominicans is a direct reflection of a number of socio-economic variables such as:

1. low earnings;
2. high incidence of single-headed families with low earnings;
3. employment instability due to structural economic transformation and the loss of blue-collar and unskilled jobs, particularly in the manufacturing sector;
4. spatial segregation in low-growth job areas, such as the inner city versus the suburbs;

5. low educational attainment in a school-knowledge based society;
6. and declining labor force participation rates, particularly among women.

From 1980 to 1990 the average earnings of Dominican men and women slightly increased, but as the changes in earnings reflect, this growth did not compare with that of the rest of the ethnic groups in the study nor did it match the rate of inflation (see **Table 17**, Chapter. II). Scholars suggest that the combination of declining wages and high rates of inflation during the 1970s and 1980s pushed many families into poverty.

Harrison and Bluestone, the leading experts on what has come to be known as "the de-industrialization" of America, have convincingly explained the decline in the real value of wages and its effect on the working people. They see the decline connected to the proliferation of low-paid jobs which directly substituted well-paid industrial jobs. By 1979, they argued, "with wages falling and the government actively seeking to slow down (and eventually to reduce) some income grants to poor

people, the negative effect of a worsening distribution of family income had become dominant" (Harrison and Bluestone 1988:135). Consequently, the absolute number of people ranking at below the poverty level grew considerably, from nearly 23 million in 1973 to over 35 million in 1983.

The decline in the value of wages and its effect on the working poor was noted also by David Ellwood, Robert Greenstein, and Isaac Shapiro, who explained in a letter to *The New York Times* that the purchasing power of low-wages had fallen drastically during the last decade. They noted that by 1989 the real value of the minimum-wage was equal to the value it had in 1956, dramatically curtailing the purchasing power of workers (Ellwood, Greenstein, and Shapiro 1989). Similarly, the now classic study of the Black underclass by William J. Wilson noted how during the 1970s increases in the price of oil by the OPEC countries gave way to recessions and inflations causing the real value of wages to fall during the following years. Consequently, low-wage, unskilled, and ill-educated African-Americans were driven into deep poverty (Wilson 1987:44-45).

The comparisons between full-time workers of

Dominican descent and other major Latino⁴ groups in the city reveal that the first continued to hold the lowest earnings. **Table 24** contains the mean earnings of full-time employed workers of major Latino groups in 1990, and it shows that while Dominicans had annual mean earnings of \$14,778, Puerto Ricans had \$20,159, Colombians \$17,151, and Ecuadorians \$16,027. **Table 25** shows that among full-time Latino male and female workers 16 years of age or

Table 24

**Mean Full Time⁵ Earnings of Major Latino groups
Persons 16 Years of Age or Older**

Population Groups	Mean Earnings	% Employed Full Time
Dominicans	\$14,778	83.7
Puerto Ricans	\$20,159	83.3
Colombians	\$17,751	84.0
Ecuadorians	\$16,027	86.0

Source: 1990 Public Use Microdata Census Sample A.

⁴. In this study the ethnic classifications of Latino and Hispanic are used interchangeably.

⁵. Full time is defined as working 35 hours or more per week.

order, both, Dominican men and women had the lowest earnings in 1990.

Table 25

**Mean Earnings of Full Time Workers of Major Latino Groups
Males and Females
1990**

Population Groups	Males	% Employed Full Time	Females	% Employed Full Time
Dominicans	\$16,277	83.7	\$12,791	80.2
Puerto Ricans	\$21,331	86.6	\$18,493	77.3
Colombians	\$18,901	89.7	\$14,766	77.4
Ecuadorians	\$16,768	89.0	\$14,711	81.3

Source: 1990 Public Use Microdata Census Sample A.

In the New York metropolitan area, the poverty rate rose to 14.8% in 1991 from 14.3% in 1990 and 12.1% in 1989. Similarly, household purchasing power in 1991 was lower than in 1979. While all families compared here may have been severely impacted by the negative effects of declining wages combined with high inflation rates, these effects were compounded among many Dominican families who

showed the largest household compositions and the lowest incomes. In 1990, the average Dominican household contained 4.7 persons. Almost 1 out of every 2 of these households was headed by a single woman, and over 50% of them fell below the official level of poverty. **Table 26** shows that while from 1980 to 1990 the poverty rate decreased for all female-headed families of major Latino groups compared in this study, among Dominicans it slightly increased from 56.4% to 58.5%.

Table 26

**Changes in Poverty Rate Among Latino Female-Headed
Families
1979-1989**

Population Groups	Poverty Rate 1979	Poverty Rate 1989	Changes
Dominicans	56.4	58.5	2.1
Puerto Ricans	67.8	57.9	-9.9
Colombians	32.8	27.5	-5.3
Ecuadorians	43.9	39.6	-4.3

Source: 1990 Public Use Microdata Census Sample A.

Some may argue that the high incidence of poverty among Dominican families stems from the combination of two

variables: female-headed homes and high dependency ratio. But a look at earnings among Dominican women may suggest yet another possibility. As reflected on **Table 25**, Dominican women with full-time employment have earnings so far below the poverty line that unless they manage to secure some kind of assistance they would be unlikely to satisfy the basic needs of their households. With the poverty line set at \$15,600 for a family of four in 1990, the average Dominican woman, head of a family of four, and employed in a full time job, faced an income deficit. She was short by \$2,809 just to bring her family to the poverty line. In other words, high levels of poverty among these families may result from the fact that the workers in question do not earn enough to support their families.

Poverty rates can rise even when family incomes increase. But the data indicate that in the case of Dominicans, increasing poverty corresponds to low salaries, or the head of household's inability to support a family of four. Truly, high dependency ratios would aggravate the state of poverty among families depending on

a single low-wage earner. Besides, a family may easily fall into poverty if headed by a woman in a society where women's market value is lower relative to men. Similarly, a household whose members depend on more than one wage-earner is likely to experience higher levels of consumption than a household with one wage-earner. But in examining the case of the Dominican family, poverty involves more than high dependency ratios or gender issues. Here one needs to consider the wage factor in itself as a fundamental creator of poverty. A state of poverty translates into the family's inability to reproduce itself socially. It is, in other words, their extremely low wages that leads the families in question to poverty. Rather than stemming strictly from the fact that Dominican families have larger households headed by single women, poverty among them includes as a variable the fact that those heads of the households earn wages that are insufficient to support even a basic family.

The conceptual association of female-headed households with poverty may well correspond to the patriarchal belief which conceives males as the only truly

reliable bread-winners. This conception sees a woman head of her household as a deviation, an anomaly, that may lead to economic or social problems. Connected with a bourgeois, orthodox, and unrealistic notion of what a family is and how it ought to be organized, the patriarchal bias conceals the true plight of women workers in the economy, chiefly the loss of their value for the process of production. A woman is underpaid because her labor is depreciated or has become either obsolete or redundant in society. At a time when traditional and conservatives definitions of the family are being challenged by the current abundance of knowledge of diverse forms of non-standard family structures, it behooves all of us one looks beyond patriarchal ideas that seem unequipped to explain economic hardship among women.

Female-Headed Households: A Case Study

I would like to look at the case of a Dominican household headed by a female worker residing in Washington Heights, to illustrate how a working woman, though holding two jobs and working 6 days a week, can fail to earn

enough to provide for the social reproduction of her family. The worker's name is doña Juana, a woman who came first to the U.S. in 1985. Her two boys, ages 12 and 14 years, followed her in 1988. Her brother, who was already living in the U.S. and had become a U.S. citizen, facilitated doña Juana's permanent residence in this country. Doña Juana is a strong 34 years old woman who only completed 8 years of school in the native land. She currently works full-time in a garment factory owned by three Dominican brothers, but this is the fifth full-time job she has had since 1985. For eleven years she has moved between the garment factory and the domestic sector. Once she left a job in a garment factory owned by a Chinese to work in another garment factory for an Indian man who paid her 50 cents more per hour and paid her a half-hour lunch time. Eventually, she was laid off permanently from this job due to production slow-down. None of the factory jobs had labor unions. None provided her with paid vacation.

Every one of doña Juana's consecutive jobs has sent her to the unemployment line at least once. The time of forced unemployment was invariably seen by the employer as

her vacation. She explains that employers normally asked workers to consider the temporary lay-offs during slow-down periods as their vacation. Doña Juana, without much formal education, is an intelligent woman. She knew that "the bosses" were deceiving her and that she deserved paid vacations. But she felt that there was nothing she could do to stop the abuse. She would have to either risk being fired, losing her job permanently, or settle for the unemployment benefits during the factory's difficult time while hoping to be rehired afterwards. Once an employer even told her that he would send her home for three to four weeks but that she could not apply for unemployment benefits since she was not being officially laid-off.

The two domestic service jobs doña Juana has held were both in New Jersey and paid \$200.00 for a six-day work week. She first worked with a Cuban family and later with a Dominican family. She obtained these jobs through a Dominican contact who worked in a travel agency not far from her place of residence in Washington Heights. She had to leave the first job because the lady of the house wanted her to work non-stop from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. She

left the Dominican family after she found out by chance that the couple's oldest son, who was bed-ridden, had contracted AIDS.

Besides her current full-time job at the factory, doña Juana cleans houses on a part-time basis. She works at this additional job on Saturday or Sunday, the day varying depending on whether or not the factory requires her to work on Saturday. She cleans two apartments, one of which is owned by a friend through whom I met doña Juana two years ago. Doña Juana does not have medical insurance. Whenever there has been a medical emergency in her household, she has gone to a public hospital that normally charged her a fee in keeping with her meager annual earnings. Doña Juana has never applied for medicaid or food stamps because she does not want to jeopardize the possibility of bringing her mother here.

The following **graph** (8) shows how doña Juana distributes the income her current jobs generate. As indicated in the graph, her income does not provide for other basic expenses such as medicine, furniture, clothing, personal accessories, toiletries, and school

stationary that are necessary for the social reproduction of the household. Nor does it provide for any kind of emergency, required gynecological visits, dentist, or long distance call to her mother back home. How she manages to make ends meet, what kinds of strategies permit her to survive, or whether it can be said that she actually does succeed in her efforts, go beyond the scope of the present discussion. For now, I just wish to show that a gap does exist between the earnings of an average Dominican woman worker and the income level deemed necessary for the minimal subsistence of a regular family.

One needs to keep in mind, however, that doña Juana's case may not accurately represent the state of poverty of many Dominican families in all its severity. Since she has been living in the same residence for the last seven years, her rent is about \$50.00 below the current market value paid for a comparable apartment in Washington Heights. In addition, her annual income is above the annual income of the average Dominican working woman. Doña Juana's higher income allows her acquisition of certain basic household items which may be outside the

reach of the average earnings of most Dominicans. The fact that doña Juana has a phone, and that in 1990 as many as 20.0% of employed Dominicans 16 years of age or older declared not to have a phone in their residence, would indicate that doña Juana is much better off than the average low-wage earning Dominican.

(Graph 8 Here)

Tables 27 and **28** contain data for 1980 and 1990 on the number of workers per Dominican household correlated with the below poverty level. As **Table 27** shows, between 1980 and 1990 the tendency among Dominican immigrants was to increase the number of workers per household. The proportion of homes with 3 and 4 workers increased and that of homes with 1 and 2 workers decreased. An observation worth making concerning the correlation in **Table 28** is that in some cases the simple adding of an extra wage-earner to a given household may not necessarily alleviate its state of poverty. Between 1980 and 1990, for instance, the proportion of Dominican households with 2 workers that still fell below the poverty level

increased by 5 percentage points. There was also an increase of a percentage point in the proportion of households with 4 workers that remained below the poverty line. The effects of the number of workers in the economy of a given home would vary depending on the household's dependency ratios, the total composition of the household, and the actual amount of cumulative income.

Further computation based on the cumulative income and the total number of members in Dominican households

Table 27

**Number of Workers in Dominican Households
1980-1990**

Number of Workers	1980	1990
0	9%	10%
1	26%	22%
2	30%	28%
3	23%	25%
4	12%	15%

Source: 1990 Public Use Microdata Census Sample A.

Table 28
Number of Workers in Dominican Households by Below Poverty
1980-1990

Number of Workers	Below Poverty Level	
	1980	1990
0	9%	10%
1	53%	57%
2	25%	30%
3	7%	5%
4	2%	3%

Source: 1990 Public Use Microdata Census Sample A.

shows the following scenario. In 1990, the average Dominican household contained 4.7 members and its average income did not exceed \$27,005. Similarly, the per-capita household income amounted to \$6,336, that is \$115 dollars below the amount required for a single person under 65 years of age to be right at the level of the poverty threshold.⁶

⁶. Since it is likely that every household would have a different number of members, per-capita household income is derived by dividing the total income of Dominican households by the total non-institutionalized Dominican population.

Some may argue that persistent high levels of poverty among Dominicans is attributable largely to recent immigrants coming from the Dominican Republic. **Tables 29a, 29b, and 29c** contain data of two Dominican cohorts: Dominicans who arrived during the 1970s and Dominicans who arrived during the 1980s. The first cohort had been living in the United States between 11 and 20 years while the second cohort had been living in the country between 1 and 10 years. Both cohorts were present in 1990. Contrary to what some may have expected, these tables show that the socio-economic status of many Dominicans does not improve with time in the United States. The poverty rate of immigrant households that entered before the 1980s, for instance, is 4% point higher than those of immigrants who arrived after the 1980s.⁷

⁷.

These findings are consistent with the fact that, as explained in Chapter I, the cohort migrating during the 1980s contained a larger number of highly educated migrants (more professional and technical workers) than the cohort migrating during the 1970s.

Table 29a

Households Below Poverty Level
Immigration from 1970 to 1979 and from 1980 to 1989 and
Present in 1990

Status	1970s	1980s
Below Poverty Level	43%	39%
Total # of Households	28,560	30,719

Source: 1990 Public Use Microdata Sample.

Table 29b

Households Below Poverty Level
Immigration from 1970 to 1979 and from 1980 to 1989 and
Present in 1990

Status	1970s	1980s
Below Poverty Level	43%	39%
100-200% Below	25%	31%
201-300% Below	17%	16%
400% Below	15%	14%
Total # of Households	28,560	30,719

Source: 1990 Public Use Microdata Sample.

Table 29c
Households Receiving Public Assistance
Immigration from 1970 to 1979 and from 1980 to 1989 and
Present in 1990

Amount	1970s	1980s
None	68%	79%
Up to \$4,999	14%	11%
5K to \$9,999	16%	10%
More than 10K	2%	0.5%
Total # Receiving Public Assistance	32%	28%

Source: 1990 Public Use Microdata Census Sample.

III

The Washington Heights Dominican Community: The Construction of an Image

In Out Of the Barrio: Toward a New Politics of Hispanic Assimilation Linda Chavez (1991) compares the Puerto Rican community of the South Bronx and the Dominican community of Washington Heights. The displacement of a variety of small businesses along some of the streets of Washington Heights, which the author presumes to be owned by Dominicans, strikes her as illustrative of the immigrants living in the neighborhood.

Contrary to the South Bronx Puerto Rican neighborhood "whose streets were filled with men and women whose bearing suggested they had no place to go [and where] men stood in groups in vacant lots; women with baby carriages and toddlers in tow strolled slowly, aimlessly down the street" (Chavez 1991:152), in Washington Heights, Chavez became highly impressed by the commercial areas found in the community and by the energy displayed by people as they moved.

In *Tropical Capitalists: U.S.-Bound Immigration and Small-Enterprise Development in the Dominican Republic* (1990), Portes and Guarnizo, emphasized the commercial sector of Washington Heights and its linkages to a similar operation in the Dominican Republic. They perceive this community as harboring an economic enclave. The authors confess that they first approached the study of Dominicans in Washington Heights expecting to find a "concentration of immigrants into ghetto-like surroundings, where ethnic entrepreneurial activity is confined to a few grocery stores and restaurants plus gambling and pervasive street drug selling. But they were "genuinely surprised to

encounter instead a thriving entrepreneurial community" (Portes and Guarnizo 1990:11).

The study describes Dominicans in New York who have opened up a variety of businesses which generate jobs for new arrivals. It is believe that the business sector represents an alternative for recent Dominican immigrants who seek better job opportunities than those offered in the secondary labor market of the receiving society. Arguably, in these jobs Dominican workers learn, first hand, skills that are useful in commerce.

Portes and Guarnizo focused on Dominicans, who, having returned home, owned businesses in the Dominican Republic at the time of the survey. The scholars established that as many as 84% of the returning capitalists had developed their commercial skills while employed in shops owned and operated by immigrants in the United States (pp.19-20). Portes and Guarnizo describe the social relations among Dominicans in Washington Heights that in their estimation form the bases for the formation and the outcomes of the Dominican entrepreneurial sector. They highlight primarily the

solidarity and trust among members of the immigrant community. The resulting outcome, that is, the thriving and expanding entrepreneurial sector, falls within the community's funds of social capital.⁸ The formation of social capital among Dominican immigrants and its impacts both in the host society and in the native country through return migration, strike the authors as a positive outcome resulting from Dominican international migration process.

IV

The above descriptions of Dominicans in Washington Heights allows little room for the kinds of stress one normally associates with the plight of a community of African descent in a society where groups with similar racial traits are known to experience antipathy and exclusion. That presentation, for instance, fails to

⁸. James S. Coleman defines social capital "by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors...within the structure. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement and certain ends that in its absence would not be possible" (Coleman 1988:98).

imagine the groups of idle Dominican males who stand for endless hours on many corners along Broadway and other Northern Manhattan avenues, and who annoy other Dominicans who would avoid rubbing elbows with them on their way to and from work or as they walk their children to and from school.

Similarly, the ethnic enclave is construed as a safe haven where Dominicans can liberate themselves from the pressures of mainstream society. The community appears portrayed as an autonomous entity, disengaged from the dynamics governing the rest of the host country. The Washington Heights described in the enclave model seems to relieve Dominicans, for instance, of the social and legal requirements that burden other communities, such as immigration papers, income tax transactions, and English proficiency.

It has been found, however, that workers may not find jobs nor better salaries in the enclave economy. In their study of Cuban and Chinese owners and workers in the enclave economy, Jim M. Sanders and Victor Nee (1987) showed that ethnic solidarity has its limits. They showed

that while the owners earned returns comparable to those earned by immigrant-minority entrepreneurs in the open economy, immigrant-minority workers of the enclave economy, however, tended to receive lower returns to human capital than immigrant-minority workers in the open economy. In a similar manner, the successful Dominican film *Nueva Yol*, which dramatizes the travails of newly arrived immigrants, among its most moving scenes, enacts the difficulty faced by a Dominican worker to find any job in the enclave and the pain of being exploited by a compatriot.

A Dominican man who migrated to New York City, Balbuena could not find a job for months. In Washington Heights he got menial, temporary, and badly paid jobs, ranging from lifting heavy boxes in a grocery store to carrying large pieces of furniture in a store. The film's Washington Heights scenes depict Balbuena's unfruitful search for employment, his sadness and despair at the sight of the moral breakdown of Dominican immigrants as witnessed in the falling apart of the family and the involvement of many Dominicans in drug-dealing. One

memorable scene captures Balbuena's face with an expression of angry powerlessness after a long day's work being paid by his temporary Dominican employer the abusive amount of \$20.00. Obviously distressed, Balbuena protests but in the end, without the protection that legal immigration papers may have afforded him, there is nothing he can do.

Balbuena came to live at a cousin's apartment where he becomes acquainted with the daily struggles of the average Dominican immigrant family. Made up by a working couple with three children, Balbuena's cousin and his wife held somewhat stable jobs. They live modestly in an overcrowded apartment, dreaming about a better future for them and their children. The film enacts the other side of the Dominican story in New York, the real city opposed to the one imagined by prospective migrants back home. The closing scene has Balbuena back in Santo Domingo, kneeling before the grave of his wife, as he explained to her the difference between the imaginary "Nueba Yol" that he had envisioned before migration and the real "New York" that he bitterly experienced as an undocumented alien.

"Nueba Yol" (demotic pronunciation typical of low-income neighborhoods in Santo Domingo) is the land of milk and honey existing in the minds of the uninformed populace. It is a city of gold, characterized by images of Hollywood and the magic land of Disney World. One can get rich easily there. Good and easy jobs abound. This modern city can help immigrants fulfill their dreams and secure a better future for their children. But, the latter, New York, is "otra cosa" (something else) Balbuena says. He speaks of the crude reality awaiting Dominicans when they get here: scarcity, unemployment and bad jobs, exclusion from the productive areas, the alienation of not belonging, the difficulty of even hoping to get what they came looking for.

V

Marginalization and Poverty: The Other Face of a Community

Census data indicate that in 1990, almost 1 out of every 2 persons in Washington Heights/Inwood in Manhattan was of Dominican descent and that from 1980 to 1990, 78% of all new immigrants who settled in this neighborhood

came from the Dominican Republic. Yet, the census can only partially account for the actual number of Dominicans residing in Washington Heights given the unknown portion of that community that has immigrated through informal channels. Washington Heights/Inwood is located at the North tip of Manhattan, extending from West 155th street to West 220th street. Alluding to the overwhelming presence of Dominicans there, the neighborhood now occasionally evokes such appellatives as "Quisqueya Heights" and "platano city".⁹

Young Dominicans growing up in Washington Heights may find it odd that, early in the 20th century, historian Reginald Pelham Bolton ascribed to this area the most beautiful topography of New York City. Impressed by the Harlem and the Hudson rivers, its many hills, and its scenic view of New Jersey, Bolton believed that

⁹. (a) *Quisqueya*, according to one of the early Spanish chronicles of the European conquest, was one of the names given by the aboriginal population to their land, the island subsequently known as *Hispañiola*, which is currently shared by the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

(b) *Platano* (plantain) which belongs to the banana family, with rice and beans, are the most frequent staple in the Dominican diet.

Washington Heights residents were blessed (Bolton 1924).

Unlike Bolton, Dominicans do not experience Washington Heights as an idyllic terrain. The rivers, the hills, and the view of New Jersey still remain, but that backdrop natural beauty is outweighed by the ugly symbols of poverty, over-crowdedness, social destitution, and architectural decay.

In 1990, almost one in two Washington Heights Dominican homes lived below the poverty line and one in five did not have a phone. **Table 30** shows the per-capita income, the poverty rate, and the lack of phone among the largest ethnic groups in Washington Heights for 1990. It shows that, by far, Dominicans have the highest percentage of homes without a phone, the lowest per-capita income and the highest poverty rate among the groups compared. Tables 9-11 contain aggregated vital statistical data concerning poverty rates, health issues, schooling, and violence in the community of Washington Heights/Inwood. In every table the comparison of 1980 and 1990 shows clear signs of increasing levels of deterioration, marginalization, and concentration of poverty. In 1990,

Washington Heights/Inwood ranked third, after Central and East Harlem, among the five poorest communities in the borough of Manhattan. From 1980 to 1990 the number of people receiving public assistance increased considerably, jumping from 23 to 32%, and the number of families living below the poverty line increased from 24 to 28%.

Besides the high levels of unemployment, which throughout the 1980s had remained consistently higher in Washington Heights than in the rest of Manhattan and the entire City of New York, in 1990 this neighborhood also registered the highest concentration of medicaid births in the region. In 1990, 4 out every 10 children born in Manhattan and 3 out every 10 born in the City were insured by Medicaid. But in Washington Heights/Inwood as many as 7 out of every 10 children born in Washington Heights/Inwood were born under Medicaid, their mothers lacking any sort of private medical insurance.

The increased influx of Dominicans combined with a politics of diminished construction and renovation of housing and school buildings led to overcrowding in Washington Heights during the 1980s. Population in the

Table 30

**Per-Capita Income, Poverty Rate, and Lack of Phone in
Washington Heights/Inwood
1990**

Population Groups	Per-Capita Income	Poverty Rate	Lack of Phone
Dominicans	\$6,641	40.5%	20.0%
Puerto Ricans	\$11,281	31.5%	10.9%
Other Hispanics	\$11,174	29.4%	8.4%
Non-Hispanic Whites	\$21,331	15.3%	2.5%
Non-Hispanic Blacks	\$14,548	28.6%	9.8%
WH/Inwood Overall	\$13,022	28.0%	

Source: 1990 Public Use Microdata Census Sample A.

area reflected a 10% growth while housing units decreased by 1%. In 1990, the median gross rent-to-income ratio in Washington Heights/Inwood was 31%. The neighborhood was among the top three with the highest rent-income ratio in the borough of Manhattan. The high rents and the rising demand for housing forced many families to double-up within single housing units. **Table 31** shows that from 1980 to 1990, the number of families slightly increase by 181 families, and that the number of householders went

down slightly by 914 people, and that the percentages of crowded and overcrowded households doubled.

The increasing demand for housing led to speculation among some landlords and superintendents who sought to exploit the situation through informal arrangements whereby even the basements of their buildings exacted high rents. As a result, today any apartment building located in certain areas of Washington Heights/Inwood may contain more apartments than the number dictated by the architectural plan when the building was constructed. The spontaneous, informal living arrangements normally take the form of individual rooms of different sizes which are rented by single tenants or a whole family. The often improvised rooms, built around garbage depositories and incinerators, often violate safety and sanitary housing

Table 31

**Selected Demographics Indicators in Washington
Heights/Inwood
1980-1990**

Indicators	1980	1990	Change in %
Population	179,941	198,192	10.1
% Pop. Receiving Public Assistance+	23.1 (41,485)	32.4 (64,208)	55.0
# of Households	70,655	69,741	-1.3
% of Crowded* Households	11.0%	22.0%	50.0
% of Overcrowded** Households	4.0%	10.0%	40.0
# of Families	44,978	45,159	0.4
% Below Poverty Level	23.9 (10,759)	27.5 (12,397)	15.3
# of Families Female Householder	14,624	18,323	25.3
% Below Poverty Level	63.9 (6,879)	70.1 (8,695)	26.4
Total Housing Units	73,566	72,553	-1.38

Sources: Department of City Planning:

(a) *Socioeconomic Profiles: A Portrait of New York City's Community Districts from the 1980 & 1990 Censuses of Population and Housing.*

(b) *Community District Needs: Fiscal Year 1993.* Manhattan.

+ Includes AFDC, Home Relief, Medicaid, and Supplemental Security Income.

* Crowded Households contain more than 1 person per room.

** Very crowded households contain more than 1.5 persons per room.

regulations.¹⁰

At the time Dominicans arrived in the city the labor market had began to require workers with school-generated skills (see Chapter II). For workers, going back to school (trade school, college, and above) for training, re-training, or up dating their knowledge, became an important trend. Thirty years later, the trend continues. Today, the more formal education one has, the higher one's earnings are likely to be. When we look at Dominicans in the school system serious doubts inevitably arise concerning their prospects for producing a competitive cadre of highly trained workers.

A 1994 study on school enrollment growth in the public system found that within the borough of Manhattan,

¹⁰. I was taken by doña Juana to one of these basements. The living arrangements are similar to what is known in the Dominican Republic as *cuarteria*, an informal housing unit in major urban centers, and used by very poor, often uprooted migrants from the country side, who cannot afford to pay for regular living quarters. The *cuarterias* are normally built in the backyard of a house. The rooms in the basement I visited were of different sizes and stood one next to the other, separated by plates of chirac. Although each individual unit had electricity, the tenants there paid a common bill charged to the superintendent's apartment, a full unit located also in the basement.

only School District 6, the district concentrating the largest number of Dominican students, was included in the list of the 10 most overcrowded school districts in the New York City region. Out of the 12 elementary and intermediate schools in District 6, 3 suffered from extreme overcrowding. The year before, District 6 had figured among the school districts in the city with the lowest percentage of pupils scoring at or above grade level either in reading or mathematics. Washington Heights Community Planning Board 12 argued that it was very difficult for children to learn in overcrowded old buildings that were falling apart and leaking noxious gasses (Department of City Planning 1993:241).

Besides the alarming math and reading scores, overcrowding, and dilapidated buildings at the elementary level, Dominican students also encounter serious difficulties in high school and college which impact on their educational outcomes. In a recent ethnographic study conducted at two high schools in Manhattan largely populated by Dominican students, Nancy López found that

Table 32

**Selected Health Indicators in Washington Heights\Inwood
1980-1990**

Indicators	1980	1990	Change in Absolute #
Total # of Hospitals	9*	1	-8
Years of Productive Life Lost due to**			
Homicide		2,778	
AIDS		1,569	
Malignant Tumors		1,234	
Heart Disease		1,061	
Cerebro- Vascular Disease		200	
Tuberculosis	26.5	71.6	45.1
Infection Rate***			

Source: Garfield and Abramson 1994:34-7.

* Hospitals in or near the area.

** Calculation of years of productive life lost combines data on the death rate with the age of those who die.

*** Rate for 100,000 population.

institutional factors, such as the disparity in funding among public schools, influenced dropout and graduation rates among the students.

Studying schools that registered among the highest dropout and lowest graduation rates in the city, López also looked at those students who applied for admission to the City University of New York. She found that only 2% from one school and 13% from the other were able to pass the freshman entrance examination (López 1996). Other institutional data support López's findings. The U.S. census data shows that the proportion of U.S. born Dominicans in college dropped from 16.7% in 1980 to 12.2% in 1990 (Hernández, Rivera-Batiz, and Agodini 1995).

Washington Heights is a neighborhood where parents fear that their children, on the way to school, the parks, or playgrounds, might be caught by stray bullets from drugs-related shoot-outs. **Tables 32** and **33** show the levels of violence and health issues in the community. As indicated in **Table 32**, in 1990 a person in this community was more likely to die violently, than by AIDS or any other of the common diseases that figure at the top of the most frequent causes of death in the United States. **Table 33** indicates that during the 1980-1990 period instances of rape declined considerably in the area, but murder,

assault, and robbery all increased significantly.

Table 33

**Selected Indicators of Violent Crimes
in Washington Heights/Inwood
1980-1990**

Indicators*	1980	1990	Change in %
Murders	20	52	61.5
Rapes	41	33	-19.5
Assaults	215	570	62.2
Robberies	944	968	2.5

Source: Garfield and Abramson 1994:22-3.

* Rates per 100,000 population.

**Marginalization and Poverty Among Dominicans: An
Assessment**

The data presented above lead one to conclude that most Dominicans confront economic hardship and poverty in the receiving society. The data show that their poverty could be explained from the perspective of the disparity between Dominicans and the labor market. Many Dominicans

have no jobs while others are poorly paid. Their employment experiences clearly reflect that they did not come to occupy booming job markets or to occupy jobs that awaited them. While most Dominicans have moved in search of economic progress and a better life, the receiving society has failed to satisfy their specific aspirations.

The difficulty of employment and, in general, the hard times encountered by most Dominicans in the labor market would seem to challenge the theoretical understanding that perceives the mobility of workers as a direct response to the labor market needs of the host country. The case of Dominican immigrants would seem to raise this question: if their labor was so badly needed in the United States, why has their relationship with the labor market been so erratic? Why have they been increasingly removed from the process of production?

We believe that the current conditions of most Dominican migrants add new insights into the understanding of the mobility of people to advanced societies. It seems probable, for instance, that people may move from a developing society to an advanced one in search of

economic progress and better opportunities, without necessarily materializing their aspirations. The foregoing discussion suggests also that one should remain attuned to the possible disparity between the needs, aspirations, and motivations of the migrants to move, and the needs, possibilities, and willingness of the host country to receive them.

Today one could safely say that poverty and marginalization among Dominican migrants result from their migration and settlement into a society which has been unable to absorb them effectively into the process of production, and where, as a result, they have for the most part joined the ranks of what could be categorized as a surplus population. The question we still need to address, however, is whether their present socio-economic condition represents a typical and temporary stage, identified with any immigrant group in the process of integration, or whether we are witnessing a situation that is likely to become permanent for the majority of the Dominican people.

Chapter IV

Theories of Labor Migration: An Alternative Reading

The two prevailing theoretical paradigms normally offered to explain the mobility of workers are the equilibrium model and the historical-structural. The equilibrium model, rooted in John Stuart Mill's concept of order and balance and Max Weber's concept of rationalization, draws on the belief in the power of certain forces to prevent chaos and generate stability and balance in society. War and disease, for instance, serve to check the excessive growth of the population. At the same time, the opening of new markets and adjusting production to the capacity of the market facilitate the regulation of commodity production to the level of demand (Mill 1900:153-6 Vol. I; 75-82 Vol. II). Similarly, the emigration of those who cannot find employment in their native land, costing the sending society nothing, prevents people from being "wasted at home in reckless speculations" (p. 366 Vol. I). In Mill's view, the redistribution of population from an over-crowded area to one in need of working hands represented more than

economic convenience or individual motive. Rather, the well being of the entire human race was at stake in such migratory movements. Mill believed that the encouragement of migration by the State generated benefits to both the sending as well as the receiving society by bringing about equilibrium in the distribution of people and resources (p.470-80 Vol. II).

Max Weber's typology of social actions, encapsulated in the term *Zweckrational* (instrumental action) is the conceptual layer to the equilibrium model. Weber highlighted rational praxis, steps taken under the assumption of a deliberate pursuit of goals based on the calculation of the cost, efficiency, and benefits involved (Weber 1978: 24-6 Vol. I). Weber thought of modern society as characterized by the expansion of the use of rationality, or the spread of purposeful reason. He was convinced that individual and institutional actions, whether economic or otherwise, increasingly stemmed from an understanding on the part of the actor of clear goals with specified benefits and costs. The mobility of workers from one arena to another is to be seen, therefore, as a function of the instrumental action that

Weber ascribes to human behavior in society.

Conversely, the historical-structural model, which largely comes as a reaction to the equilibrium approach, can be traced to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' understanding of historical events from a socio-economic point of view. These thinkers believed that as the productive forces changed in a given society, all other social institutions (politics, law, religion, art, etc.) would change accordingly (Marx and Engels 1978). In this logic, population movements, either demographic or geographic, are seen as part of a totality of changes affecting the process of production in a given society. To those who viewed forced emigration from Ireland in the 19th century as resulting from over-population, Marx and Engels posited that compulsory emigration, a social phenomenon experienced in many parts of the world during different historical stages, was triggered by socio-economic imperatives. In Ireland as well as in England, Marx and Engels argued, modern forced emigration stemmed from the changes introduced in the process of production "produced [,in their own words] by landlordism, concentration of farms, application of machinery to the

soil, and introduction of the modern system of agriculture on a great scale... It [was] not [therefore] population that presse[d] on productive power; it [was] productive power that presse[d] on population" (Marx and Engels 1975:56-7) .

Migration scholars proponents of the equilibrium model start from a micro perspective. The potential migrant is perceived as a rational agent who chooses to move on the basis of clear calculations of the cost and the benefits involved in migrating. For migrant workers, for instance, the prospects of getting better jobs and wages in the host country become the dominant pull factor behind their decision to move (see Harris and Todaro 1970; Sjaastad 1962). By the same token, their move generates a state of balance or equilibrium with regards to the two localities involved in the migratory process by removing excess labor from one setting to satisfy the need for workers in another (Spengler and Meyers 1977). Seen from this point of view, migration becomes a favorable "win win" arrangement for all parties concerned.

Proponents of the historical-structural approach, on the other hand, assume a less harmonious, macro view of

society. They presuppose that some workers move due to the pressure of socio-economic changes generated in the production system that impact on the use of and need for laborers in the home country (History Task Force 1979; Bonilla and Campos 1981). Within this logic, forced migration corresponds to the dynamic of uneven capitalist economic development and the movement of global capitalism (Emmanuel 1972; Amin 1974; Portes 1978). From the perspective of such a framework, the relocation of surplus laborers, often orchestrated by the states of the sending and the receiving societies, stems from a demand for cheap labor in the host locality. Thus, while the equilibrium perspective assumes that migrant workers would only move if in so doing they can attain a better deal than what their native society has offered them, the historical-structural model suggests that the spatial location and distribution of workers depend on changes in the productive system.

We have here opposing conceptual tendencies whose dissimilar character lies in the essence of their propositions. One is centered around the agency of the individual who migrates in order to satisfy his/her

personal needs. The other is centered around the forces that emanate from society's mode of production to explain the urge of some people to move. What is interesting to note is that while both theoretical paradigms may start from different propositions concerning the role of the individual in the migratory process, it seems that they do not disagree as to the reasons behind a receiving society's willingness to receive migrants. While they differ in presenting the way, for instance, workers may embark on a migratory journey, either by their own initiative or in response to invisible forces beyond their control, they seem to share the understanding that workers will relocate to areas where a need for their labor exists. Both theoretical paradigms enjoy the support of numerous scholars.¹ In the following section we would like to look closely at the point of convergence of the two theories in question, that is, the mobility of workers vis-a-vis the presumed need for laborers in the receiving society.

¹. For a good review of both theories see Portes 1978; Wood 1981; George 1990.

Labor Mobility and Demand

In the equilibrium model workers take the initiative to move from society 1 to society 2 because they expect to derive material benefits, by finding a better job or earning higher wages. In the historical-structural model workers relocate from society 1, where they have become surplus and lost value, to society 2, where they can re-enter the process of production and generate surplus value. Both theories construe the relocation as potentially productive to both the migrants and the receiving society. Migrants expect a better job, higher wages, or simply a re-incorporation into the labor process. For the receiving society, the movement promises to address labor shortages, or more importantly, to provide a cheaper supply of workers. Similarly, both theories uphold the conception of a smooth connection between supply and demand in the labor market of the host country. This logic presents international labor migration as the result of two combined variables: the workers' need to emigrate due to their home country's inability to employ them and the host country's interest in a cheaper labor force.

The understanding of international migration as the result of a demand for cheaper labor presupposes the existence of jobs awaiting migrants in the host society. By implication, this reasoning overlooks the possibility of unwanted immigration. Yet, marginalization and long-standing poverty among immigrants resulting from high rates of unemployment and underemployment in receiving societies would insinuate a more complex paradigm. The study of Dominican migrants in New York City lends itself fittingly to an exploration of the aforementioned assumptions. Dominican immigrants exhibit persistent high levels of poverty and marginalization, welfare dependency, unemployment and underemployment since their arrival. The fact that everyone who came looking for a job was not able to find one, suggests that a migratory movement may not necessarily reflect the need for workers of the receiving society. In other words, the society that received them did not need or want them.

The link between labor migration and labor demand also suggests that a society's lack of interest in foreign workers would suffice to deter potential job-seekers from reaching its shores. Yet, persistent reports concerning

the increasing influx of immigrants into nations which since World War II have maintained restrictive immigration policies would indicate the difficulty of preventing and regulating the entrance of unwanted visitors. Current evidence would seem to suggest that immigration may persist in spite of a nation's decision against it. Within the last years, for instance, Germany, England, Italy and Japan have proposed new laws against the increasing immigration of Eastern Europeans, North Africans, Middle Easterns, and South Asians. Among some countries, the idea to create a common immigration law under the European Community to bar the door to unwanted immigration has gained currency, while other nations have gone as far as to impose high monetary sanctions on airlines which bring in undocumented migrants.

Migration and Declining Labor Demand

The arrival of Dominicans in the United States coincided with a declining demand for blue-collar and unskilled workers as well as with the massive entrance into the country of other immigrants who were attracted to

the job market. Coming mostly from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean regions, immigrants tended to concentrate in large metropolitan cities, where they expected to find entry-level jobs at the bottom of the market. During the 1970s and 1980s, along with thousands of Dominicans, thousands of other immigrants, particularly Hispanics and West Indians settled in New York City. The city then was experiencing an economic transformation that radically changed the needs of the labor market. The industrial-based economy began to be replaced by a high-tech and service oriented economy. Native low-and-unskilled-blue collar workers, particularly from ethnic minorities, could not withstand the high unemployment levels and declining industrial demand. They began to abandon the city massively, while large numbers of immigrants, expecting to find jobs, began to enter. By 1990, despite the large immigration influx, New York City still had almost one million people less than it had in 1960. Yet, the mobility of people had noticeably changed the demographic composition of the city.

I

The declining demand for blue-collar and unskilled workers and the increasing influx of immigrants would have serious negative repercussions for all city workers searching for unskilled jobs. The combination of a declining demand and an enlarging supply of workers of similar skills would generate competition among job-seekers, native and foreign born, and their easy substitution by employers. The works of Frank Bonilla and Ricardo Campos on Puerto Rican workers have pointed to a process of labor substitution that is provoked by the mobility of capital and labor. Economic transformations in Puerto Rico and in the United States displaced thousands of Puerto Rican low-and-unskilled workers who were mobilized within the Caribbean and North American geographies, which Bonilla and Campos view as one single labor market. But while jobless Puerto Ricans had to move back and forth between their island and the mainland searching for scarce unskilled jobs, new immigrants arrived to both places, looking to compete for the same scarce jobs that Puerto Ricans were pursuing. Similarly; while thousands of Puerto Ricans, on-the-move, remained

jobless, presumably many of the new arrivals managed to accommodate themselves in the same economies that had driven the former out (Bonilla and Campos 1981;1986).

Scholars have also suggested that the increasing immigration of unskilled workers affected the wages of unskilled native workers. George Borjas, Richard B. Freeman, and Lawrence F. Katz, among others, have measured the effects of large groups of immigrants on the labor force. Analyzing demographic data from the 1980 Census, Current Population Surveys, exports and imports, and from employment and output of large manufacturing industries, these authors found that the combination of immigration and trade deficits reduced the employment opportunities for less skilled native workers and caused a decrease of between 30 to 50 percent in their wages (Borjas, Freeman, and Katz 1992:215). Trade flows are negatively affected by the fact that import industries employ relatively fewer skilled workers, many of whom are underpaid immigrants. The authors argue that the effects of immigration on the work force should be understood as long-lasting since "unlike trade deficits that change the implicit labor supply only annually, immigration increases the nation's

work force permanently (as long as immigrants remain economically active)" (p. 214).

While some scholars have doubted the negative effects of immigration on the labor market opportunities and wages of native workers, there has been consensus in the literature concerning its negative impacts on the labor market outcomes of immigrants.² New arrivals provide employers with bargaining power in the form of a stock of fresh workers who are freely used to replace immigrants who have managed to gain employment and secure some benefits. In a study of immigrant workers in Ventura County, California, Richard Mines and Phillip L. Martin found that "while the more recent migrants [had] caused displacement, the displaced workers [were] not American citizens. Rather, the jobs of other Mexicans [were] being threatened" (Mines and Martin 1984:138-9). Mexican workers who were relatively stable in citrus farms in Ventura, where they had attained seniority, union

². Studies by Simon, More, and Sullivan 1993; Rivera-Batiz 1991; Grossman 1982; and Vroman and Worden 1992 concluded that there was little or no evidence that immigration produced any effect in state level wages or employment.

membership, good wages, and fringe benefits, lost their positions to newer Mexican workers hired at a lower wage and without indirect benefits. Similarly, in a study based on data from the 1980 census Borjas established a positive correlation between a 10 percent increase in immigration and a 10 percent decline in the wages of immigrants (Borjas 1987).

II

The decline of blue-collar and unskilled jobs began to transform the work force. School-related reports indicate, for instance, that pure vocational instruction has given way to educational centers that train students to become workers who could compete in a high-tech global economy. Workers formerly trained in manual labor were now being required to have schooling equal to four years of English, writing, math, and science. Trades such as plumbing, mechanics, and masonry no longer depended solely on strength and natural aptitude. Now those fields began to draw more and more on the application of a sophisticated knowledge of technology, mechanical tools,

graphic design, and computerized engines. In the world of manufacturing, learning of heavy machinery has become less useful than knowing about abstract notions necessary to grasp the complexity of a changing technology. More importantly, those who once favored the changes in vocational schools, asking for curricula that combined skills and strong academics, now decried the federal educational policies of the 1960s. They associated it with an ideology that emphasized access and equity without a sufficient concern for performance and the reality of a changing economy.

The increasing requirement in the labor market of skills based on school-related-knowledge and language proficiency reduced the likelihood of employment for workers whose educational levels and language abilities were poor. Workers whose abilities did not match the desire of the labor market were now more likely to suffer than before the decline of blue-collar jobs. They were also less equipped to compete for the new jobs generated in the economy. From 1960 to 1990, New York City lost roughly a net total of 812,000 jobs in the blue-collar industries. During the same years, the FIRE, services,

and government sectors generated approximately 889,000 new jobs, many of which were considered low-skilled positions. The problem with the new low-skilled jobs was not only that there were not enough jobs to meet the demand but also that even the most menial jobs (i.e. janitor or maid) often required unreasonable qualifications. Many required English proficiency which placed them beyond the reach of those who had poor or no command of the English language. **Table 34** contains data indicating the level of schooling and English language proficiency among Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Colombians, Ecuadorians, and Other Latinos during the 1980s. The data show that when compared to pertinent groups, Dominicans have the lowest educational attainment and the least language proficiency, which make them less competitive before their other Latino counterparts.

The growing demand for services by a high-paid middle class devoid of leisure time generated a number of unskilled jobs such as dog-walking, per-diem house cleaning, service for food and other necessities. This new job market had at its disposal an expanding idle labor force which included non-traditional workers from every corner of the labor spectrum: holders of various part-time

Table 34

**Educational Level and English Language Ability of
Civilian Persons 16 to 64 Years Old
1990**

Category	Population Groups				
Schooling	DOM.	PR	COL.	ECUAD.	Other Lats.
Mean Years of School	9.9	10.8	11.2	10.9	11.2
Less Than HS	58.3%	51.6%	39.8%	46.0%	42.5%
HS Diploma	19.3%	24.4%	29.0%	25.8%	24.0%
Some College	16.7%	18.3%	22.1%	21.2%	20.5%
Bachelor Degree	4.0%	3.9%	6.8%	5.4%	7.7%
More than Bachelor	1.8%	1.8%	2.3%	1.6%	5.3%
English Language					
None/Poor	45.4%	16.0%	35.6%	41.1%	27.8%
Very Good	20.7%	20.7%	31.6%	24.5%	21.5%
Excellent	34.0%	63.3%	32.8%	34.4%	50.7%

Source: 1990 Public Use Microdata Census Sample A.

jobs, college students in need of earning money for tuition (for instance, by 1975 public higher education institution such as the City University of New York had

begun charging tuition), dynamic of the household economy that made the participation of multiple breadwinners far more necessary than it had been before, and the increasing displacement of American workers by European workers, particularly from the former socialist block who began to arrive into the United States.

The intense competition among workers for low-skilled jobs in the service sector is reflected in the fact that menial jobs that once were thought to be reserved for incoming minority immigrants with little formal education, and hardly any proficiency in English are now held by workers who do not fit that profile. The horrible case on September 17th, 1995 of a young female piano teacher who was brutally murdered and sexually abused in Central Park by a young man presumed to be mentally ill, comes to mind because of the characteristics of the person who found the victim while working in the area. A non-Hispanic White-woman, the person, described as a dog-walker, appeared to be in her early 30s and spoke English well when describing her horrible finding to the police and the news media.

The abundant supply of workers competing for scarce

jobs can also provide employers with an opportunity to rehearse other than legitimate labor market criteria based on the quality of the human capital embodied in the pool of job-seekers at the moment of hiring. Specifically, it has been suggested that the labor market outcomes of minority workers are affected by discriminatory hiring practices based on the racial or ethnic background of the job-seekers in question (Reich 1981; Rodríguez 1991). In the case of unskilled minority workers, their employability is affected by a combination of factors, including the traditional relationship between supply and demand plus the issue of racial differentiation. The labor market outcomes of skilled and highly educated minority workers, even if they are situated in desirable jobs, could still be affected by their race or ethnicity.

A 1989 study was conducted in the cities of Chicago and San Diego to measure the extent of employment discrimination against persons who "look" or "sound" Hispanic. Individual pairs of job-seekers, one Hispanic and one Anglo, were carefully matched as to credentials, skills, and experience, and sent to apply for low-skilled

jobs. The outcomes of their search showed a great disparity along ethnic lines: The Anglos received as much as 52% more job offers than the Hispanics; 3 out of every 10 employers treated Hispanics unfavorably; and employers granted as much as 33% more interviews to the Anglo applicants than the Hispanic ones (Cross et. al., 1990: pp.1-2)).

Tables 35 and 36 contain correlations between earnings, English language ability, and educational attainment for Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Colombians, Ecuadorians, and Non-White Hispanics. In keeping with the logic of the human capital theory, the correlations show that the more education a worker has and the better he/she speaks the dominant language, the higher his/her earnings. The evaluation of each individual group considered here provides evidence to substantiate the human capital notion.

But the paradigm offers only a partial view of the picture. The correlations also show differences in

Table 35
Mean Earnings+ by English Language Ability
Males-1989

Population Groups	DOM.	PR	COL.	ECUAD.	White-Non Hispanic
English Proficiency					
Poor	\$14,574	\$17,958	\$17,094	\$16,475	\$25,150
Moderate	\$18,815	\$20,548	\$19,906	\$20,204	\$30,385
Strong	\$21,420	\$23,929	\$24,741	\$20,448	\$44,443

Source: 1990 Public Use Microdata Census Sample A.

earnings that one cannot explain simply from the standpoint of educational attainment nor ability to speak the dominant language. Overall, the payoff for educational and language achievements is far less for Hispanics than for Non-Hispanic Whites. Similarly, chances are that if you are Dominican and speak poor English you would have earnings lower than any worker of another nationality who has a similar command of the English language. Furthermore, one may argue that among all the groups compared, Dominicans are least likely to gain much from pursuing advanced educational degrees. In

light of that apparent analytical anomaly, one wonders about the extent to which racial/ethnic variables may be influencing the earnings of Dominicans.

Table 37 contains correlations of mean earnings, age, race, and nativity for Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Colombians, and Ecuadorians who were employed full-time in 1990. The figures show that, other than race and earnings, the other variables hold more or less similar values for each one of the groups compared. They show that among the groups considered, Dominicans had the lowest earnings, (\$14,778). They also had the lowest and highest percentages of workers who classified themselves as Whites and Blacks respectively (22 and 28 percent). Clearly, one cannot draw a cause-effect relationship between race and earnings from the data on the table, but the figures help to problematize the picture by discouraging a lineal interpretation of the link between human capital and labor market returns. The picture suggests that one should not ignore the role of racial discrimination against Dominicans in the labor market. The available data would seem to justify the hypothesis

Table 36

**Mean Earnings+ by Educational Attainment
Males-1989**

	Not HS Graduate	Ratio* %	HS Graduate	Ratio* %	Coll. Graduate	Ratio* %
DOM.	\$15,802	0.61	\$20,048	0.44	\$21,801	0.40
PR	\$18,005	0.69	\$25,701	0.57	\$34,678	0.64
Col.	\$17,142	0.66	\$22,202	0.49	\$28,975	0.53
ECUAD.	\$17,017	0.65	\$20,169	0.45	--	--
White						
NonHisp.	\$26,061	1.00	\$45,041	1.00	\$54,582	1.00

Source: 1990 Public Use Microdata Census Sample A.

+ Mean earnings are calculated for all persons with positive earnings

* Earnings ratios are calculated by dividing earnings for each group by earnings for nonWhite Hispanics.

--Insufficient sample size.

that if we lined up all the Hispanic subgroups according to skin hue from the lightest to the darkest, we may find that, with the exception of Puerto Ricans whose higher earnings may be influenced by their U.S. citizenship status, the lighter the skin-color of a newcomer group is,

Table 37

**Selected Demographic Characteristics of Latinos
Employed Full Time 16 to 64 Years of Age and Mean
Earnings by Age, Race, and Nativity, in 1990**

Population				
Groups				
	Dominican	Puerto Rican	Colombian	Ecuadorian
Mean Age	36.3	37.3	37.1	35.9
Race				
(in %)				
White	22.3	43.9	54.1	40.3
Black	28.1	6.1	2.3	2.6
Other	49.6	50.0	43.6	57.1
Nativity				
Born Abroad				
(in %)	93.8	54.5	94.4	96.8
Mean				
Earnings	\$14,778	\$20,159	\$17,151	\$16,027

Source: 1990 Public Use Microdata Census Sample A.

the higher the returns to its human capital are.³

³. Using 1980 census data Clara Rodriguez (1991) found that, all things being equal, Puerto Rican males who classified themselves as "other" earned 8% less than Puerto Rican males who classified themselves as Whites.

A Labor Market's Decline

Post 1965 immigrants to the United States found a troubled economy. But the origins of the problem predated the arrival of the new wave of immigrants. Years ago, some scholars began to note that not every one who wanted to work would find a job. During and after the 1960s, unskilled jobs had ceased to be easy to find while the pool of workers who needed them was increasing. The transformation that the labor market was undergoing did not result in a net creation of low-or-nonskilled jobs that accorded with the growth of the labor force. The incorporation into the process of production of even a part of the incoming immigrant population had to do primarily with shifts within the contingents of workers, such as labor substitution and discrimination, rather than with an absolute rise in the demand at any given time.

Over 30 years ago Joan Robinson, a leading British economist, argued that the problem of unemployment in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s had to do with structural causes. Embracing the notion that advanced capitalism tended to produce an increasing surplus

population which the system could not absorb, the economist warned that "even healthy economic booms [would] leave a considerable 'reserve army' unemployed" (Robinson 1962:41). Robinson did not see the problem of full employment necessarily connected to level of investments, as some economists had thought, but rather to the capacity of the means of production to generate jobs. Robinson pointed at the imbalance between supply and demand as the root of the unemployment problem, contending that "Technical progress [was] continually raising output per man hour in industry, and the labor force [was] continuously increasing" (p.41). She attributed serious consequences to the inability of an advanced capitalist economy to produce enough jobs to satisfy the needs of the labor force. As she herself put it: "The leading capitalist nations [seemed] to be gradually drifting into the situation of an underdeveloped economy. The characteristic feature of economic underdevelopment is that the system fails to offer jobs to all available workers, not through a temporary *fall* of demand, but for lack of a sufficient increase in the stock of means of

production to employ them. This is the situation in which the United States finds itself now ... To preserve near-enough full employment, market demand must expand as fast as potential output; merely to prevent it from falling is not adequate" (p.42).

The inability of the system to absorb workers who are willing and able to work, represents one of the deepest contradictions of capitalism. There is simply not a job for every one who wants one. Accumulation involves the systematic expansion of production as well as the reduction of its cost. While expansion of production leads to mechanization, automation, technification, and the search for new areas of investments, the need to reduce cost brings about the dislocation, substitution, and removal of workers from the process of production. The pool of workers able and ready to enter work constantly increases. The pool feeds on the addition of new workers resulting from the biological reproduction of the population and by the continuous influx of immigrants who are expelled by job markets in the sending societies.

The economic restructuring of the 1960s emanated from

the need to cut the cost of production and widen profit margins. Among the various consequences, the transformation in the production system altered the need for and use of laborers. In the process, the bifurcated labor market with "good jobs" at one end and "bad jobs" at the other, began to be replaced by a new arrangement. Now the labor market increasingly rejected laborers and created fewer jobs, either good or bad, to satisfy the employment needs of job-seekers. By the mid 1980s, most companies were contemplating downsizing. By 1990, the United States led all industrialized nations in resorting to cutting jobs, as a tactic to minimize costs and increase profits. Increasing cuts in labor across the board and slow creation of jobs, led to high unemployment rates and an ensuing sense of hopelessness among job-seekers. Instead of expecting a secure job market, workers have become used to a volatile, evasive, and diffuse market which has narrowed its capacity to harbor the ever growing contingent of workers. The search for options to reduce cost has entailed an intense and constant mobility of capital. Many new jobs are created

in the process either through science and technology or relocation, but many more are temporarily or permanently destroyed.

Jobs are not only mobilized internally but they are also shipped away across the oceans. The internationalization of production and technological improvements stressed the use of cheaper labor in peripheral nations. The mobility of U.S. capital into Free Trade Zones throughout the Third World, for instance, may not have resolved the unemployment problem in these countries, as many have convincingly argued, but it has lessened the need to import workers here. Companies formerly moved around to escape negative growth. Subsequently, their movement seemed primarily to pursue higher profits. Yet, in both cases, the move left behind a legacy of job loss and dislocation of workers.

Continued Immigration: Justification and Reforms

The idea that recent migration to the United States responded to a relative shortage of labor in given industries whose survival and competitiveness depended on

a cheap, insecure, and abundant labor force is challenged by economist Vernon Briggs in *Mass Immigration and the National Interest* (1992). The author argues that "Beginning in the mid-1960s and accelerating in the decades that have followed, the labor force of the United States entered a period of protracted growth ... From 1976 to 1988 the U.S. grew ... by an astounding 26.5%", growth that exceeded by more than one third the labor force growth of other nine leading industrialized nations, including Japan, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom (Briggs 1992:203).

Briggs attributed the unprecedented labor force growth to three causes: mass immigration, the growth in the female labor force, and the maturing of the population. Since immigration has consisted mainly of unskilled and poorly educated job-seekers at a time when unskilled, blue-collar jobs were declining, and the nation was unable to satisfy the employment needs of unskilled native workers who were increasingly discarded by the process of production, Briggs contends that "there is absolutely no indication that the United States [would] be

confronted with the prospect of ... any shortage of unskilled workers. In fact, no technological advanced nation that has from 20 to 40 million adult workers who are functionally or marginally illiterate need have any fear of a shortage of unskilled workers in its immediate future" (p. 220).

The major reform of the immigration law came in the mid 1960s with the passing of the Immigration Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act), which essentially sought to eliminate the national origins system. It has been argued that the new immigration legislation did not intend to increase the number of immigrant workers since "there were widespread fears in Congress at [that] time that increasing the number of immigrants in general would lead to adverse employment and wage effects in the labor market" (Briggs 1992:107). The fears about the negative effects of immigration were stimulated in 1964 by the Republican Party in its campaign discourse during the presidential election. The labor unions lobbying efforts against immigration induced the Congress in 1965 to terminate the 22-year-old Mexican Labor Program (the *bracero* program).

Immigration reform had been urged for a number of years by members of Congress, as well as by presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson. These heads of States had felt that the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act discriminated against the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies of the Eastern and Southern European countries. The 1952 Act essentially encouraged the entrance of people from Northern Europe, particularly from Great Britain which had received 42% of the visas, and from Germany, Ireland, and Scandinavia, which together had received 30%. The Southern and Eastern European countries, however, had only received 15% of the visas granted to Europe (Bogen 1987: 18-21).

The passing of the 1965 reform had been delayed by a strong and systematic opposition in Congress. Those who had opposed the proposed immigration legislation felt that the 1952 Act needed to change since it allowed the entrance into the country of the people best qualified to "preserve the cultural and sociological balance of the country" (Bogen 1987:21). A consensus in Congress was reached in 1965 when the immigration bill was presented to

the floor with two important new components: the emphasis on family reunification and the imposition of an annual ceiling of immigration to countries in the Western Hemisphere. The two new components sought to reassure the opposition that the immigration reform would not alter the ethnic composition of the country. This was clearly expressed by one of the two congressmen who proposed the 1965 bill, Emmanuel Celler, a Democrat from Brooklyn. Celler, while on the floor urging to pass the bill argued that "favoring relatives would prevent a rapid shift in the ethnic mix of the new immigrants because their nationalities would match those already here" (Bogen 1987:22). "There will not be" Celler argued, "comparatively, many Asians or Africans entering the country since the people of Africa and Asia have very few relatives here, comparatively few could immigrate from those countries because they have no family ties to the United States" (Briggs 1992:111).

The 1965 Immigration Act provided equal immigration access to all countries in Europe. Under the new immigration act the distribution of visas was as follows:

74% of the visas were reserved for family reunification, 20% for workers with skills needed in the U.S., and 6% for political refugees. Immigrants admitted under the family reunification provision were subjected to a Preference System arranged in seven categories. All immigrants not admitted under the family reunification or refugee provisions needed to have a certification from the Department of Labor that their presence was not going to bring any negative effect in the labor market.

The impositions of an annual ceiling of 120,000 for the Western Hemisphere went into effect in 1968. By 1976, concerned over the backlog of applicants seeking visas, especially from Mexico, the 1965 Immigration Act was amended. A ceiling of 20,000 immigrants per any single country and the Preference System were imposed on the countries of the Western Hemisphere. The modification intended to control further population movement from this region. Congress feared that, if restrictions were not imposed upon the individual countries of the region, a single country, pressured by internal population increase and economic hardship, could possibly make use of most of

the regional quota (Briggs 1992). In addition, the extension of the Preference System would limit the likelihood of immigration from the region since most potential immigrants were related to permanent residents of the U.S., who could have only 20% of the petitions granted, rather than to U.S. citizens, who had the privilege of petitioning 54% of the visa.

Surplus Here, Surplus There, Surplus Everywhere

The mobility of Third World workers to the United States after War World II has its root in having been expelled from the process of production in their home countries. Scholars have shown that this expulsion of workers has often occurred as a consequence of a direct or indirect involvement of the United States in the economic and political affairs of the sending societies (Portes 1978; History Task Force 1979; Sassen 1988). We argue further that the Third World workers expelled constituted in effect a surplus labor force in the sending societies without necessarily responding to a demand for labor in the receiving country. This is not to deny the possible

role of the receiving society in encouraging the influx of immigrant workers. The mobility in question presupposes not only a search for material survival on the part of the workers, but also a disregard of their well-being on the part of the State of the sending country. Using the data available on Dominican immigrants in the United States, we still need to explore the question of how these immigrants can survive and make economic progress in a receiving society that did not invite them nor had much use for their labor.

Internal migration of people in Latin America around the 1950s and later caused similar concerns among scholars in the region wishing to explain the reasons for the mobility and the prospects for these people. The intense mobilization had led to the formation of a large contingent of workers who had failed to secure formal employment after arriving at their destination. In addition, their inability to find adequate jobs resulted in widespread and long-term absolute poverty among the immigrants. Scholars were puzzled by the phenomenon which they thought had to do with structural causes,

particularly the region's economic under-development due to its economic dependency. The well-known theory of marginality put forward by various Latin American thinkers actually emerged from the puzzling question of labor mobility and continued unemployment.

In considering the prospects of Dominican migrants in the United States two factors let us to consider the theory of marginality in Latin America. The first is the increasing inability of the American economy since War World II to absorb large contingents of workers, which Joan Robinson has attributed to structural causes rather than frictional or cyclical ones. The second is that, as Frank Bonilla and Ricardo Campos have proposed, capitalist colonial or dependent economies tend to replicate the models of the parent economy. The U.S. and the Puerto Rican labor markets, Bonilla and Campos contend, were interconnected by a single mode of production and Puerto Rican workers, upon moving to the North American mainland fell subject to production constraints similar to those that had pushed them from their native country. These insights suggest to us that the the theory of marginality

could shed some light on the understanding of the socio-economic conditions and prospects of Dominican immigrants in the United States.

I

During the 1970s a number of Latin American social scientists engaged in a heated debate concerning the growing number of unemployed workers in the region. Resulting in what subsequently became known as the theory of marginality, the intellectual consensus concurred in viewing the precarious conditions of the growing mass of unabsorbed or irregularly absorbed workers as inherent to the process of capitalist production. Thenceforward, questions regarding the function and fate of the marginals became issues of passionate debate. The marginals were mostly migrants who moved from the country-side to the urban areas in search of jobs. Most of them lived in absolute poverty and lacked basic social services.

In many Latin American countries, the mobilization process had begun in the 1950s. In others, especially in Central America and the Caribbean, the phenomenon took

place during the 1960s and 1970s. The mobilization was linked to a rapid industrialization process which mechanized the country-side, undermining the use of agrarian labor. In addition, population movement from the country-side occurred in response to a lack of investments in the areas and on the disempowerment of the landless peasantry. The cities, the center of industrial production, appeared as their logical destination.⁴ People went wherever they could have the hope of finding a job.

However, it soon became clear that thousands of migrants would not find the jobs they had yearned for. Neither the industries nor the infrastructure had the capacity to absorb all those who came displaced from other areas. Dependency theorists blamed the foreign control of the means of production by the core countries and the consequent expropriation of economic surpluses from the peripheral nations of Latin America (Gunder Frank 1969). The migrants, mostly left by the institution of government

⁴. For more details on the issue of urbanization in the Third World countries, please consult Alan Gilbert and Josef Gugler 1992. See also Carlos Dore y Cabral 1979, for more details concerning the movement of people and distribution of land in the Dominican Republic.

to fend for themselves, improvised their living quarters in shanty-towns that often expanded the geographical limits of the urban areas,⁵ and developed various survival mechanisms.

In an era characterized by the rapid penetration via foreign investments of international capitalism, with local bourgeoisies aiming to further internal accumulation, scholars struggled to understand what function a rapidly growing impoverished population could possibly have for capitalist accumulation. Their effect on society became a real challenge for intellectuals and developmental theorists who debated the subject. Their poverty was thought to have an adverse effect on the expansion of consumption in the internal market. The abundant literature fostered by the debate reflects two contending theories which are best represented by the works of Anibal Quijano and Jose Nun.

Quijano argued that the marginals were produced by capitalist production when for diverse reasons a number of

⁵. For more details on the theory of marginality see Pablo Singer 1973; Francisco Weffort and Anibal Quijano 1973; and Pablo González Casanova 1965.

workers could not be formally incorporated into the process of production (Quijano 1977:19). He contended that during stages of capitalist growth, most marginals could be re-incorporated into the process of production in so far as they belonged to the Industrial Reserve Army (IRA) which Karl Marx had defined as a population that for one reason or another becomes excess to production at a given time. The IRA is perceived as a relative surplus population since its condition of redundancy relates only to economic production. The group has clearly defined functions in the capitalist system since it remains ready for a future re-incorporation into production at the time of capitalist growth, although re-entrance was likely to be under irregular conditions, including underpaid and temporary employment. During times of widespread unemployment and economic contractions, the IRA functioned as a general mechanism of repression to keep wages low, thus offsetting worker unions pressure to increase them. It also served to deter labor organizing. Therefore, in light of its useful function, the IRA as understood by Quijano, rendered a necessary service to the capitalist

system (p.27).

Like Quijano, Nun also views the marginals as the result of capitalist production. However, he contended that many of the workers who are rejected by the process of production become part of an *absolute*, rather than *relative*, surplus population (Nun 1969:199). Nun argues that "Not all surplus population necessarily constitutes an IRA, a category which implies that the surplus population has a function for the system as a whole" (p.185. Author's translation). Nun's innovative argument focuses on the function and fate of the marginals. At the monopolist stage of capitalist development, due to its growing number, part of the relative surplus population becomes *afunctional* (having no particular use) and *dysfunctional* (creating social strikes and/or failing to generate consumption) for the production process (pp.:183;226). Marked by afunctionality and dysfunctionality, the surplus population no longer serves the functions ascribed to it by Quijano, says Nun. He argues that not only labor but also workers may become surplus in capitalist production. Generated by the

process of accumulation, but no longer required by it for its momentum, surplus lapses into marginality, a no man's land that goes beyond the demarcations of mainstream society. Nun argues that international migration serves to diminish that part of the surplus population (the marginals) which has become afunctional to the system of production (p.206).

Nun believes that international migration has become a safety valve to reduce the number of marginals in the sending society. We still have to reckon with understanding the conditions of marginals once reaching their destination, and whether the receiving society gives them the opportunity to engage in productive employment and lose their condition of marginality. Immigrants to the receiving society, then, come in search of the opportunity to engage in productive employment to overcome their condition of marginality. When one looks at post 1965 immigration to the U.S. in light of the insights offered by Robinson, Bonilla and Campos, and Briggs, one would deem it unlikely that incoming unskilled immigrant job-seekers could shed their marginal condition. On the

contrary, the socio-economic conditions described by these authors would lead one to conclude that most of the immigrants will fail to connect with the labor market in the United States in a way that will ensure their material well-being.

Similarly, if the mobility of workers was taking place between social formations which were intrinsically connected by the very fact of sharing a capitalist system of production (i.e. the U.S. and the Dominican Republic) which, regardless of its stage of development, among its vital characteristics was its need to further accumulation based on the constant reduction of the cost of production, particularly of its laboring population, then the generation of surplus labor was going to be equally common to both societies connected through a process of migration. In this case, the unity of the sending and the receiving society's labor markets reflected in their common system of production would entail a common fate for Dominican job-seekers. Thus, one could say of Dominicans as Bonilla and Campos have said of Puerto Ricans: "In the United States [Puerto Ricans would] confront in only

slightly altered configuration the very same economic forces that marked them as supernumeraries in the homeland" (Bonilla and Campos 1981:152).

II

Since 1965 the entrance into the United States of a massive influx of unskilled, blue-collar workers from the Third World has received two kinds of response on the part of the government. The first kind of response can be found in effect from 1965 to 1980, and the second became current from 1980 to the present. During the first period we could say that the entrance of migrants received a sort of "benign neglect" treatment. Up to 1980, the year of the Refugee Act, the government seemed neglectful of taking any severe action to restrict or prevent the entrance of unneeded job-seekers. Overall, the "benign neglect" approach manifested itself in a prevailing permissiveness whereby documented aliens found it relatively easy to settle in poor, working-class communities that received limited social services and other institutional supports. The immigrants did not

encounter a sound initiative in place that aimed to enhance their conditions or facilitate their integration. They did not find a labor market with policies designed to synchronize supply with demand so as to offer them jobs and protect the price of their labor.

During this period, we witness that migrant communities were severely under-served in many of their pressing social needs. At the same time, to find work many migrants had to carve for themselves a space in the informal realm. Others succumbed to employment under irregular and extremely exploitative conditions. In either case, immigrants were faced with a receiving society which did very little to ease the obstacles and barriers that blocked their normal integration into society. In other words, while the government took no action to halt the entrance or settlement of immigrants, it remained indifferently passive to their social or labor market needs. This remains true despite the modification of the 1965 Immigration Act in 1976 that aimed to control the immigration of unwanted job-seekers strictly through legalistic and procedural means. The "benign neglect"

approach, with its laissez faire attitude on the part of the government authorities, had a negative impact on the lives of immigrants.

One need only imagine the prospects of Dominican children who are raised in communities with social services that are severely underfunded, with abundant signs of violence, widespread poverty, and schools that lack the accoutrements to prepare them effectively for the labor market. Only gloomy visions come to mind when thinking of the future that such children could have. The prospects for adult Dominican immigrants is not better as the case of doña Juana, whom we studied in Chapter III, would suggest. Most Dominican workers are overexploited in the process of production. The overexploitation of workers (also known as superexploitation) is understood as the paying of wages which fail to reproduce workers' labor power or generate their social reproduction. What makes overexploitation possible is the existence of a supernumerary labor force or an *increasing* labor reserve army. Thus, the social reproduction among Dominicans is not only challenged by their overexploitation in the labor

market, but also by their high rates of unemployment primarily produced by their lack of saleable job-related skills.

Up to 1980, then, both, the Dominican Republic and the United States, opted to deal with the needs of Dominican job-seekers in a similar manner. The home country shrugged its shoulders about them and opted to stimulate their emigration so as to export the "problem" while hoping to reap some benefit should the expatriates survive the migratory process. The receiving society, on the other hand, simply decided to deal with "the problem" by allowing the entrance of lawful Dominicans but making no provision to employ them, address their precarious social situation, or to keep them from falling into deep poverty. One can argue that the ruling structures in the Dominican Republic and the United States have agreed to use migration, unemployment, and overexploitation in tackling the problems of surplus workers in the sending society who turn into unwanted job-seekers in the host country.

In 1980 we witness a shift in the U.S. government's

thinking about Third World immigrants. The "benign neglect" approach ceased to exist as the dominant response to the entrance of unneeded immigrants. Legislative efforts began to be introduced which proposed a firm attitude towards unwanted job-seekers coming in. As the decade progressed, various immigration laws were approved. It became increasingly clear that the State no longer wished to maintain a passive or even merely discursive attitude before the immigrant flows. With the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, which specifically targeted and penalized employers who hired foreign-born workers who did not have proper work-authorization, the State initiated a new modality for regulating and controlling the entrance of migrants. Firm, aggressive, and often punitive measures now became part of immigration legislation.

Benign indifference gave way to an aggressive offensive policy against immigrants coming from the Third World, particularly from Latin America and Asia. Legislation was supported by a mass of federal funds. Sophisticated devices such as infrared eye glasses,

contrived for use to inspect the border with Mexico, which had become an international bridge facilitating the influx of people from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia. At the border, the INS employed electrified fences, tall cement walls, ferocious and well-trained-dogs, special police troops, and other paraphernalia to contain the flow of undocumented immigrants. While until then the new policies had only targeted undocumented migrants, in the mid of the 1990s, the focus expanded to include documented ones as a pervasive anti-immigration climate took hold of the land.

Spokespersons against documented immigration raised their voices. Suddenly, policy-makers became concerned about the need for an urgent action concerning the nation's surplus unskilled foreign workers. Propositions of curtailing immigration flourished among government representatives from the states of Florida, California, Texas, and Louisiana. In June 1992, Senator Robert C. Byrd shared this incident with his peers in the Senate: "I pick up the telephone and call the local garage. I can't understand the person on the other side of the line.

I am not sure he can understand me. They're all over the place, and they can't speak English. Do we want more of this?" (Sontag 1992:E5). The answer to his question came in the form of two new laws enacted during this current year: the Anti-Terrorist Act and the Welfare Reform Act. Both legislative acts have been perceived as anti-immigrant.⁶ In the process, the anti-immigration climate in governmental level has succeeded in winning over representative voices from civil society. A national survey on the issue of immigration conducted by Gallup in 1994 revealed that 65% of the American people wanted legal immigration curtailed.

Old friends of immigrants have also adopted the anti-immigrant discourse. George J. Borjas, the author of *Friends or Strangers?* (1990), stated that post 1965

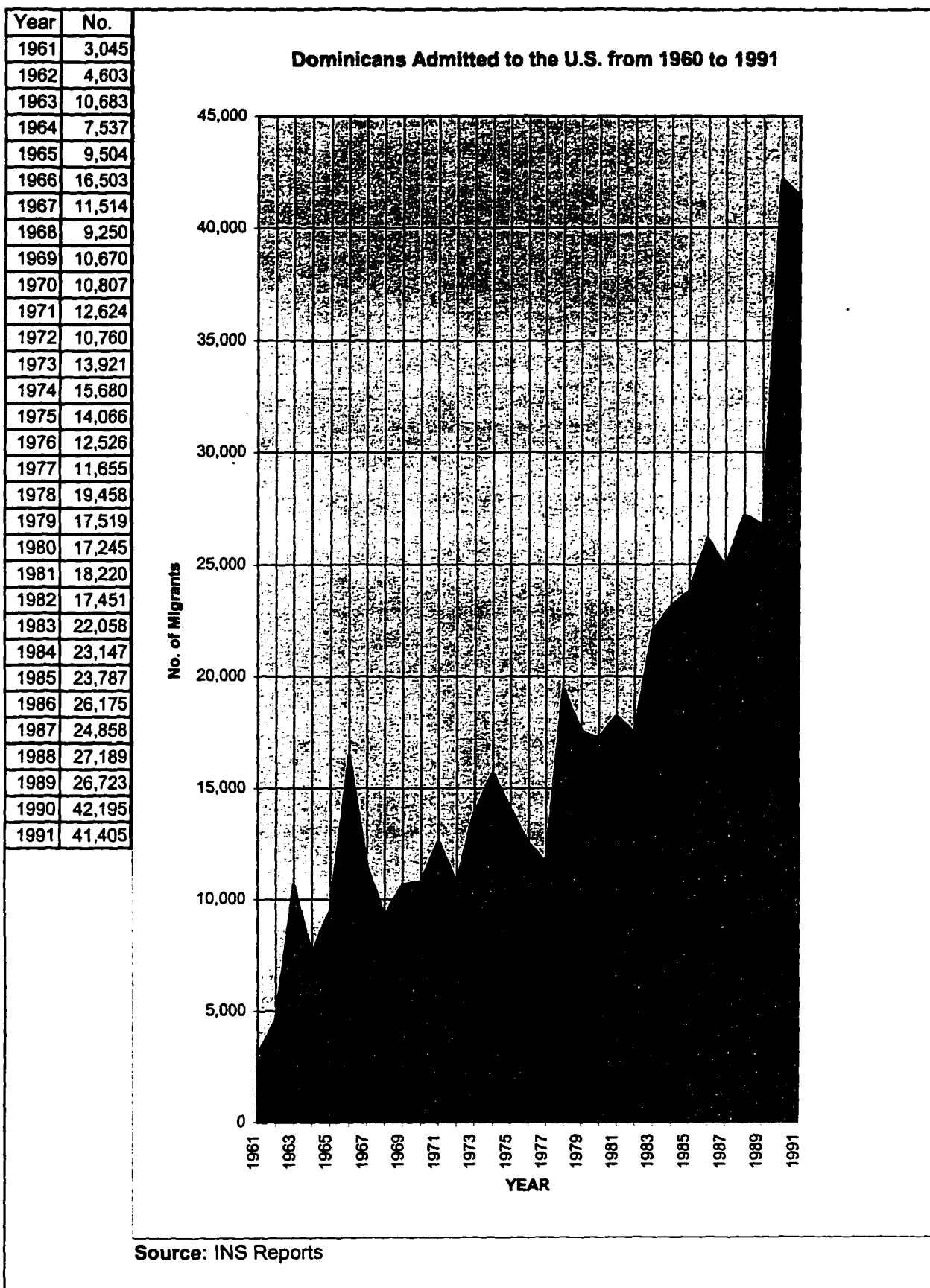
⁶. In July 17 1996 *The New York Times* reported that many immigrants who were living legally in the country had been placed in detention by the INS office and were facing deportation. Under the new Anti-Terrorism bill, any documented immigrant who has been convicted of a felony, including a misdemeanor, perhaps an arrest for smoking marihuana at a young age, is subject to detention and deportation. Similarly, the new Welfare reform imposed many restrictions on aid to legal immigrants who are not naturalized U.S. citizens.

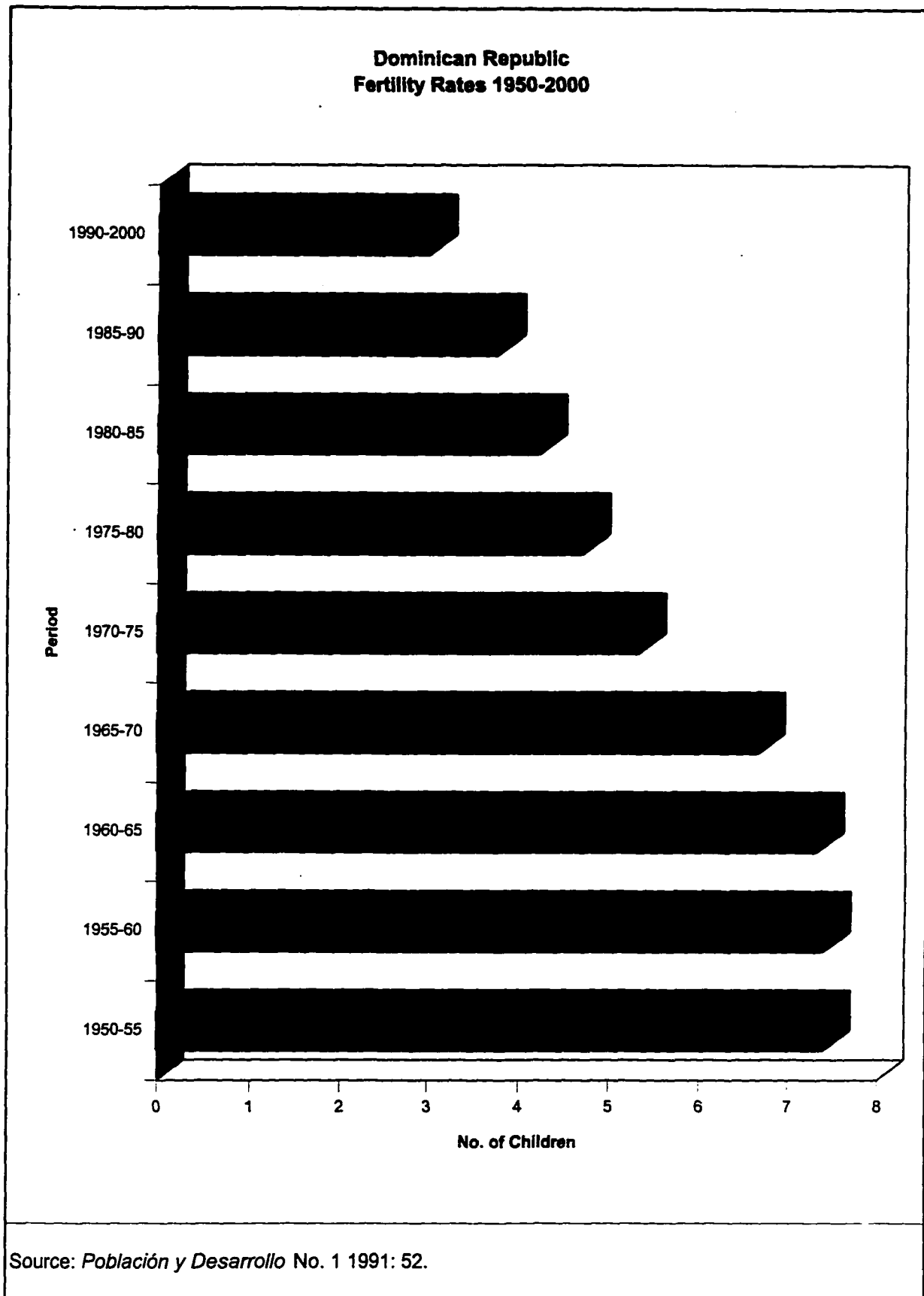
immigrants joined the welfare system at a much faster pace and greater number than old immigrants and that their presence constituted a net loss in revenues to some states (Sontag 1992:E5). Roger Waldinger, on the other hand, declared that indeed immigrants do take jobs away from African-Americans and adds that "the immigrant influx makes it unlikely that African-Americans would reap dividends even in a period of full employment" (Waldinger 1996:Op-Ed).

The pervasive anti-immigration wave has reached a peak. Voices adversarial to the influx of Third World immigrants are being heard loud and clear in every corner of this country. Washington no longer desires to send an unclear message regarding immigration: unequipped immigrant job-seekers are no longer welcome. Employers have not mounted any opposition. Unwanted job-seekers, their children included, must be ready to deal with an inimical ambience. Whether the Dominican ruling structure will care to make the appropriate adjustments at home to lessen the expulsion of unabsorbed Dominican labor is a question worth asking. How much pressure Washington

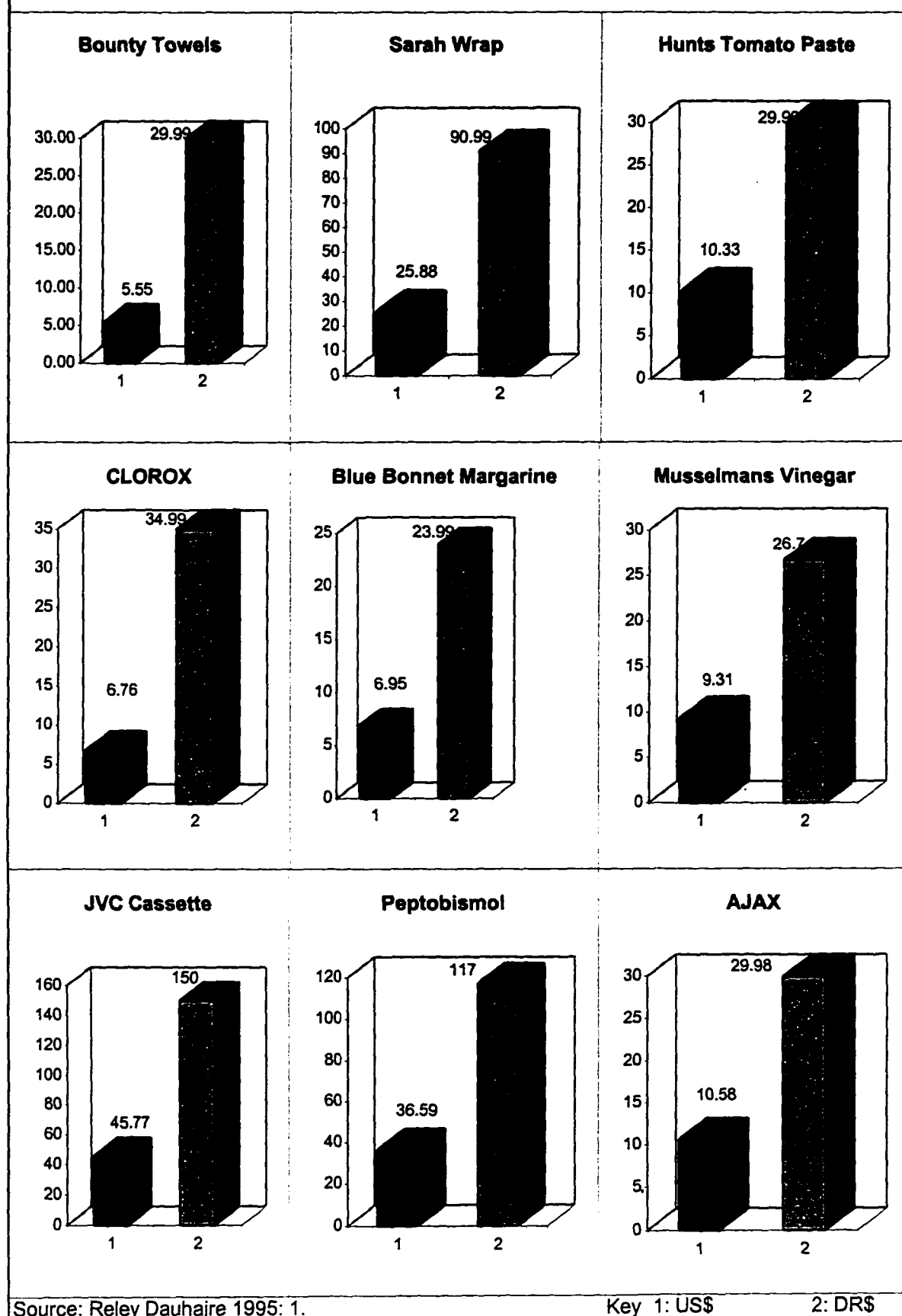
is prepared to exert on the Dominican government to contain compulsory emigration is yet another. One should ask also whether impoverished Dominicans who have learned to perceive emigration as the route to economic progress can be expected simply to relinquish that option and risk remaining confined in permanent poverty in their country. The extent to which leaving home may constitute an effective strategy for Dominicans to fulfill their goals of economic progress can only be established after they emigrate, not before. What Dominicans for sure know is that the adventure of emigrating, whatever the perils involved, represents the possibility of hope. For them, the potential to improve their lot is likely to be more appealing than staying home where the alternatives for socio-economic progress are slim. My sense is that the adoption of legislation and aggressive measures to stop Dominican job-seekers from coming to the United States will not suffice. Dominicans will continue to come, whether wanted or not, as long as they think, justifiably or not, they can change their condition by traveling legally or illegally to this side of the Atlantic.

APPENDIX

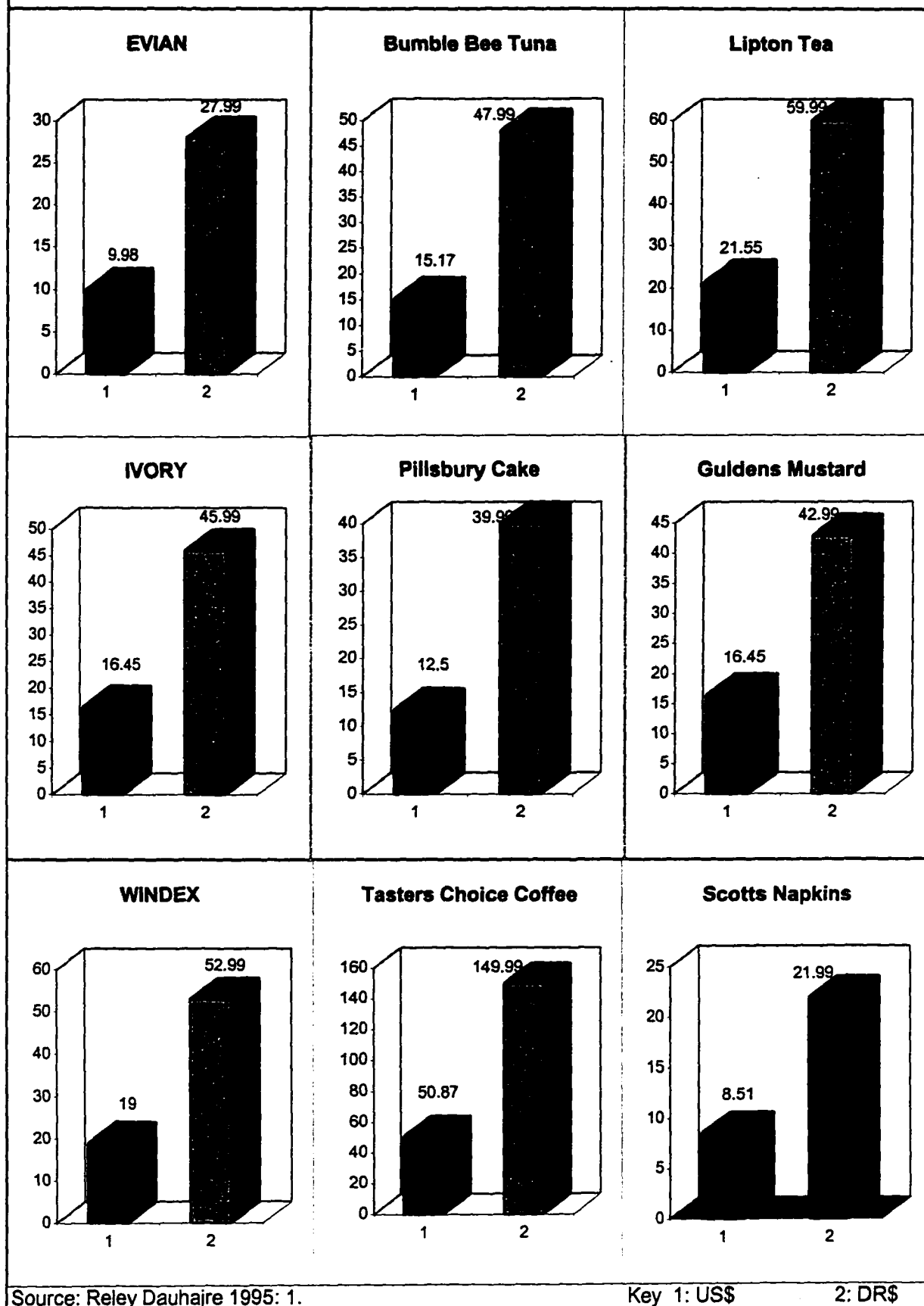




GRAPH 3A
U.S. Consumer Products in the Dominican Market (in DR\$)

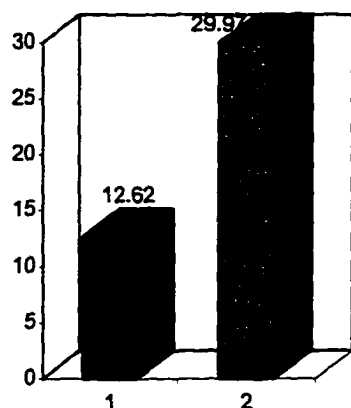


GRAPH 3B
U.S. Consumer Products in the Dominican Market (in DR\$)

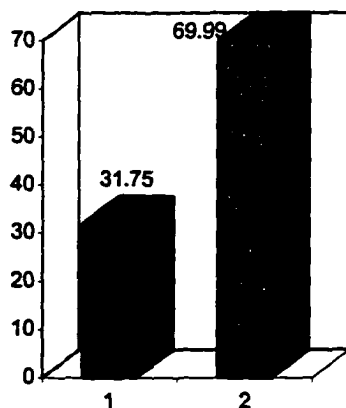


GRAPH 3C
U.S. Consumer Products in the Dominican Market (in DR\$)

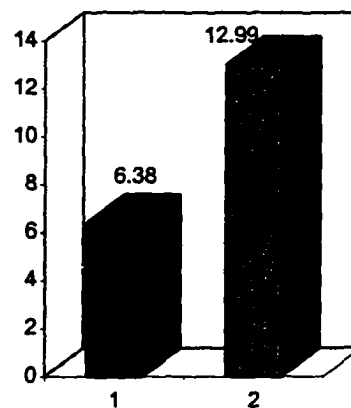
Muellers Spaghetti



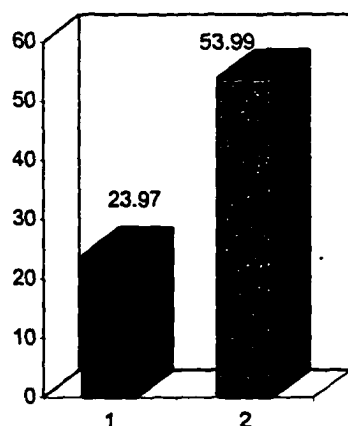
Velveeta Cheese



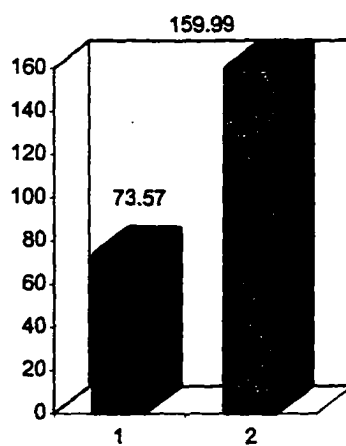
Del Monte Corn



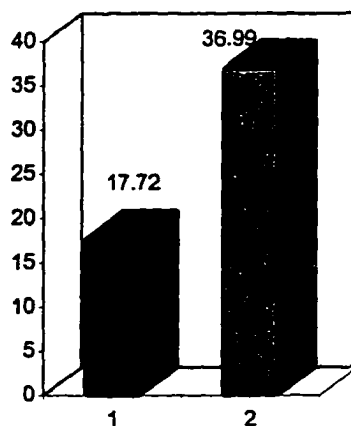
MOTT'S Apple Juice



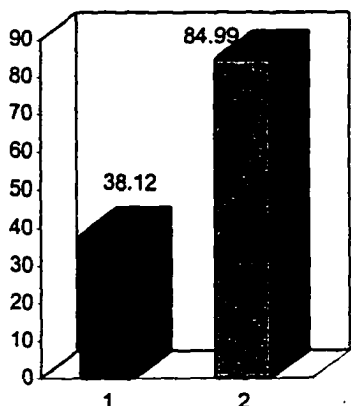
Pampers Phases



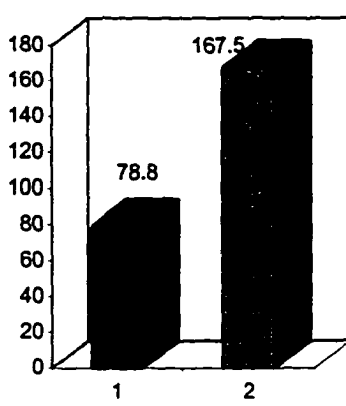
GLAD Garbage Bags



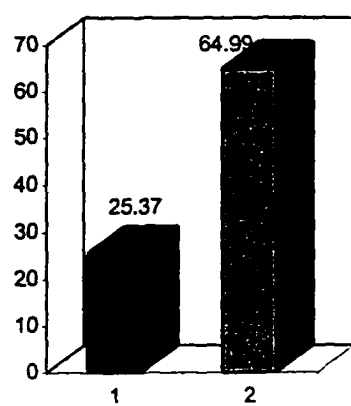
KELLOGS Cereal



Tylenol Extra Strength



Mazola Oil

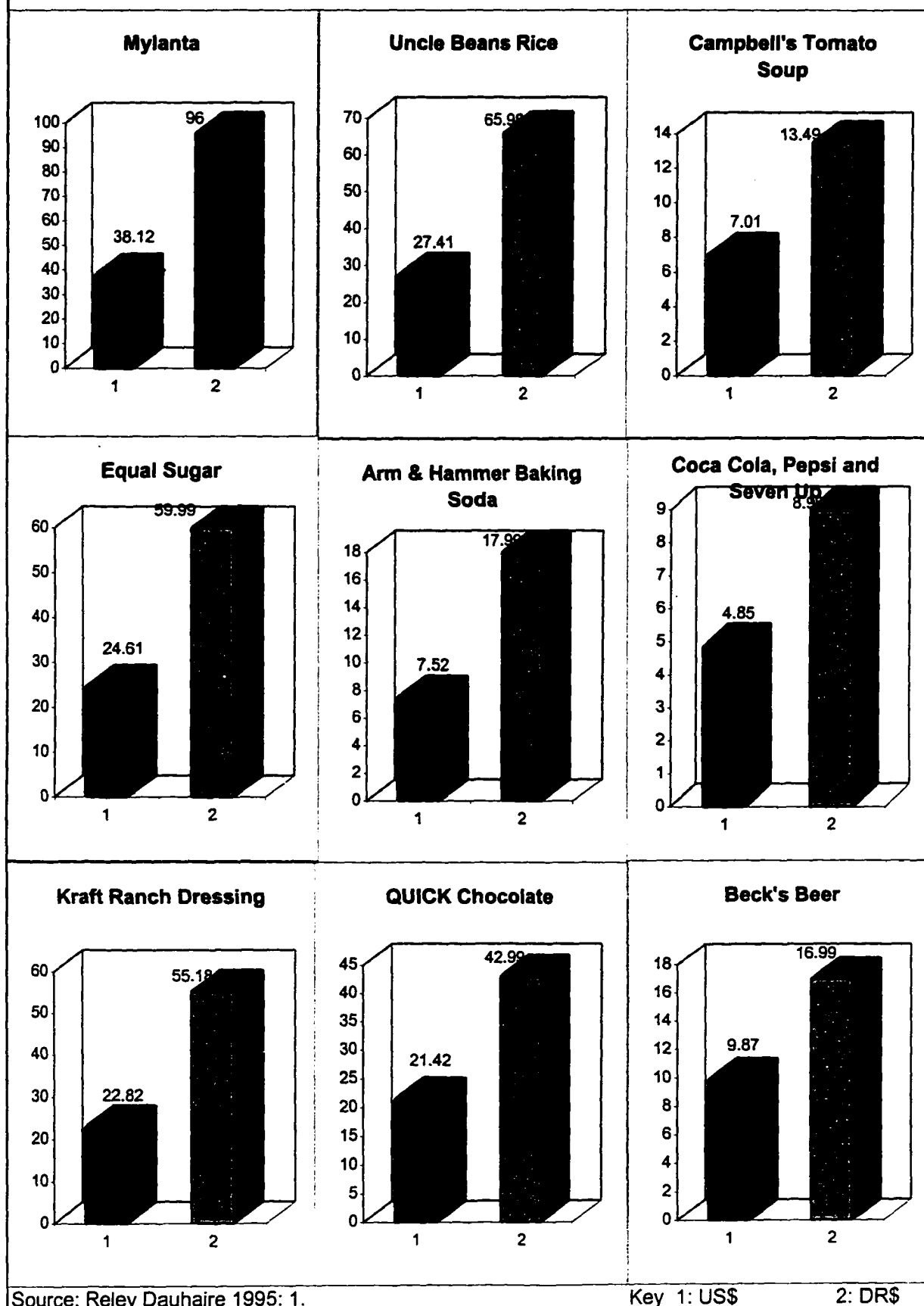


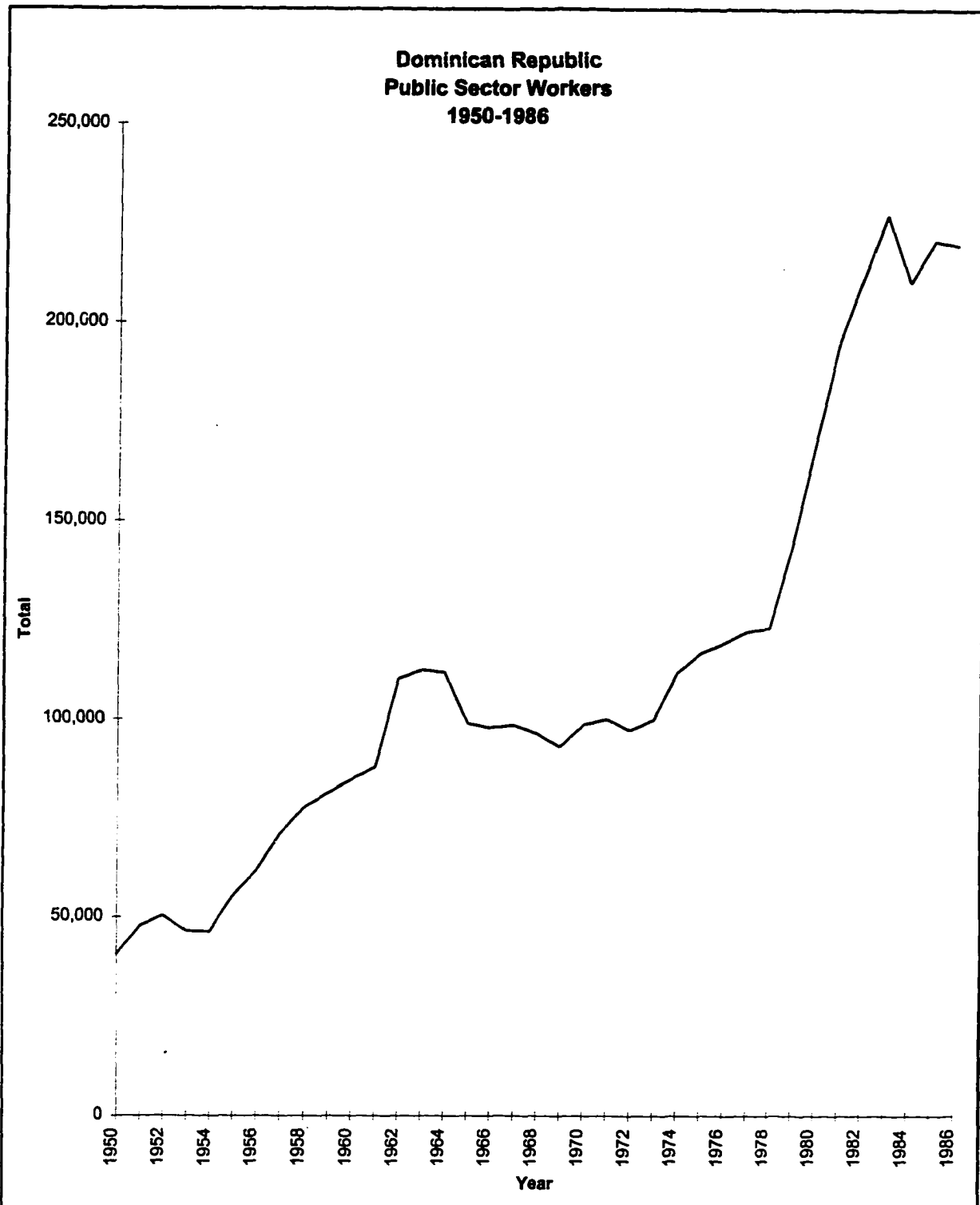
Source: Reley Dauhajre 1995: 1.

Key 1: US\$

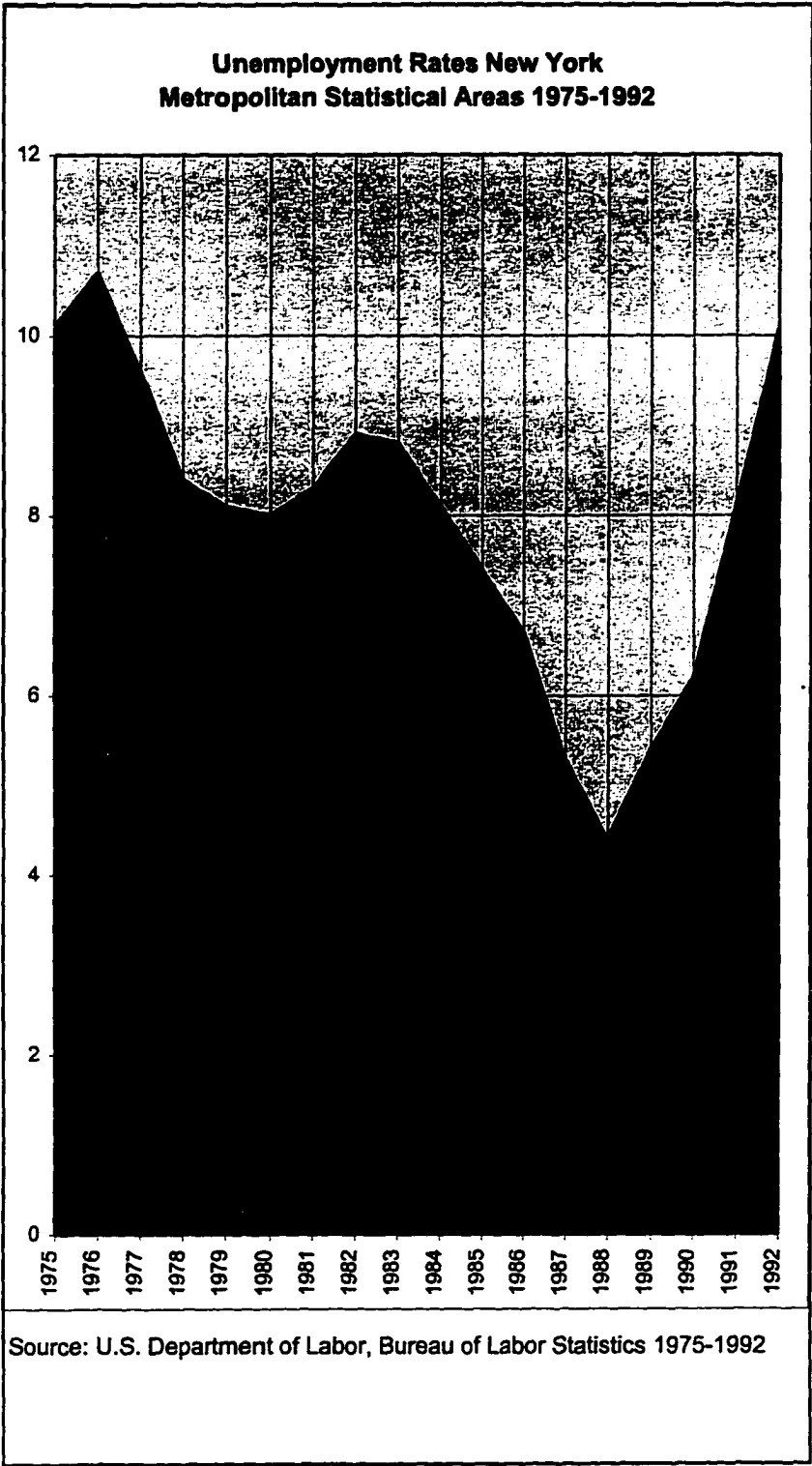
2: DR\$

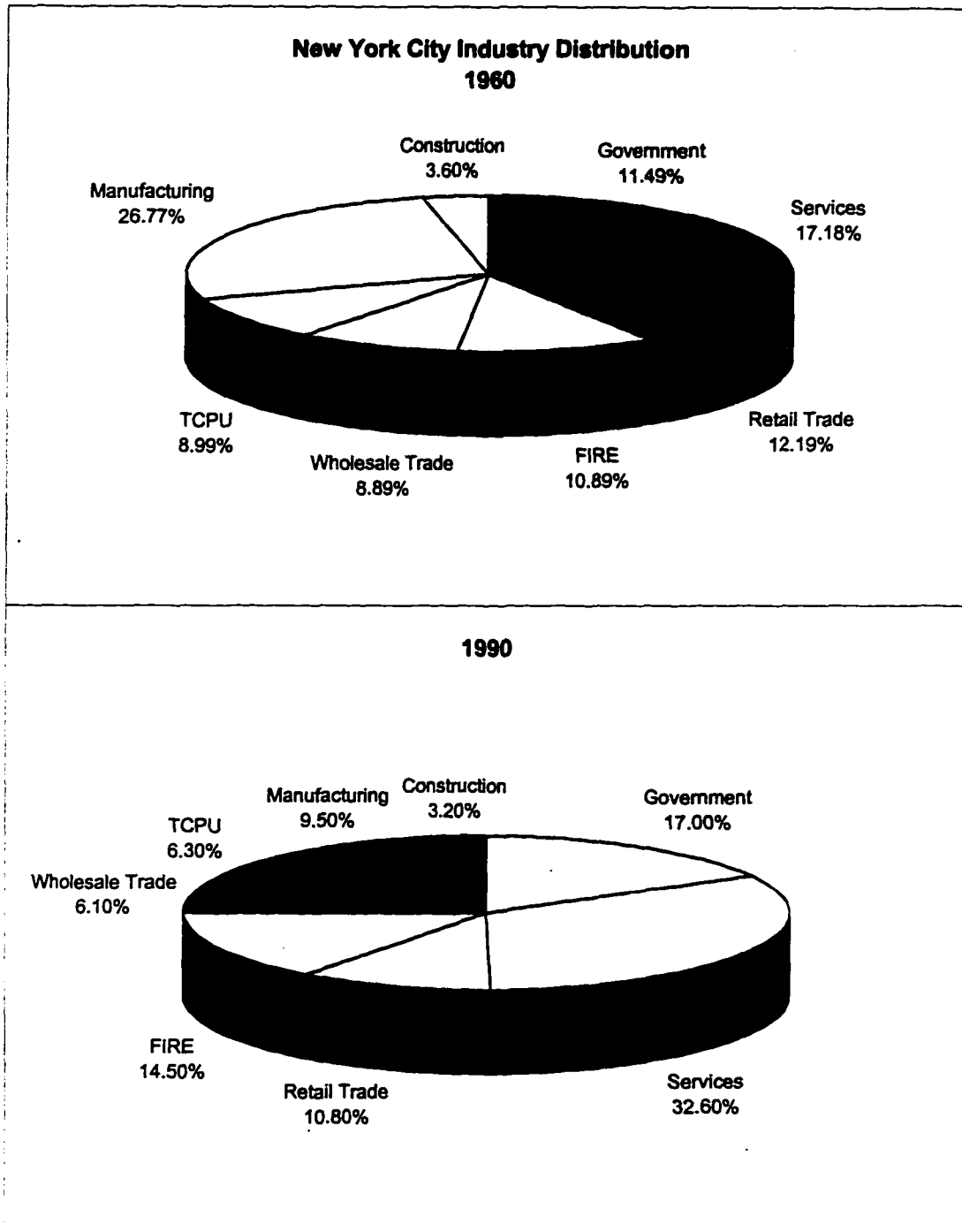
GRAPH 3C
U.S. Consumer Products in the Dominican Market (in DR\$)





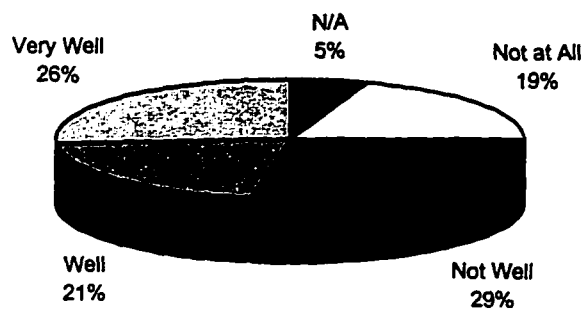
Source: *Población y Desarrollo* 1988: 25.





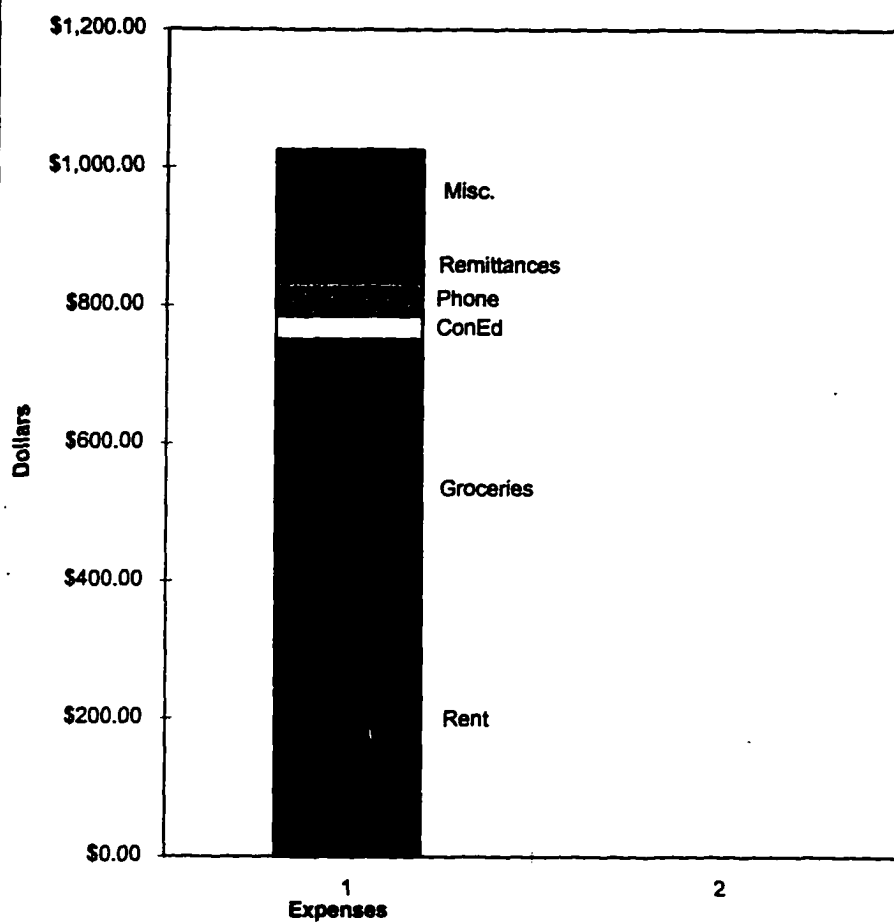
Source: *New Opportunity for a Changing Economy*. New York: Department of City Planning, 1993. 4.



English Literacy Among Dominicans

Source: 1990 Public Use Microdata Sample.

Dofia Juana's Income Monthly Distribution

**LEGEND:**

Monthly Income from FT Job: \$833.12

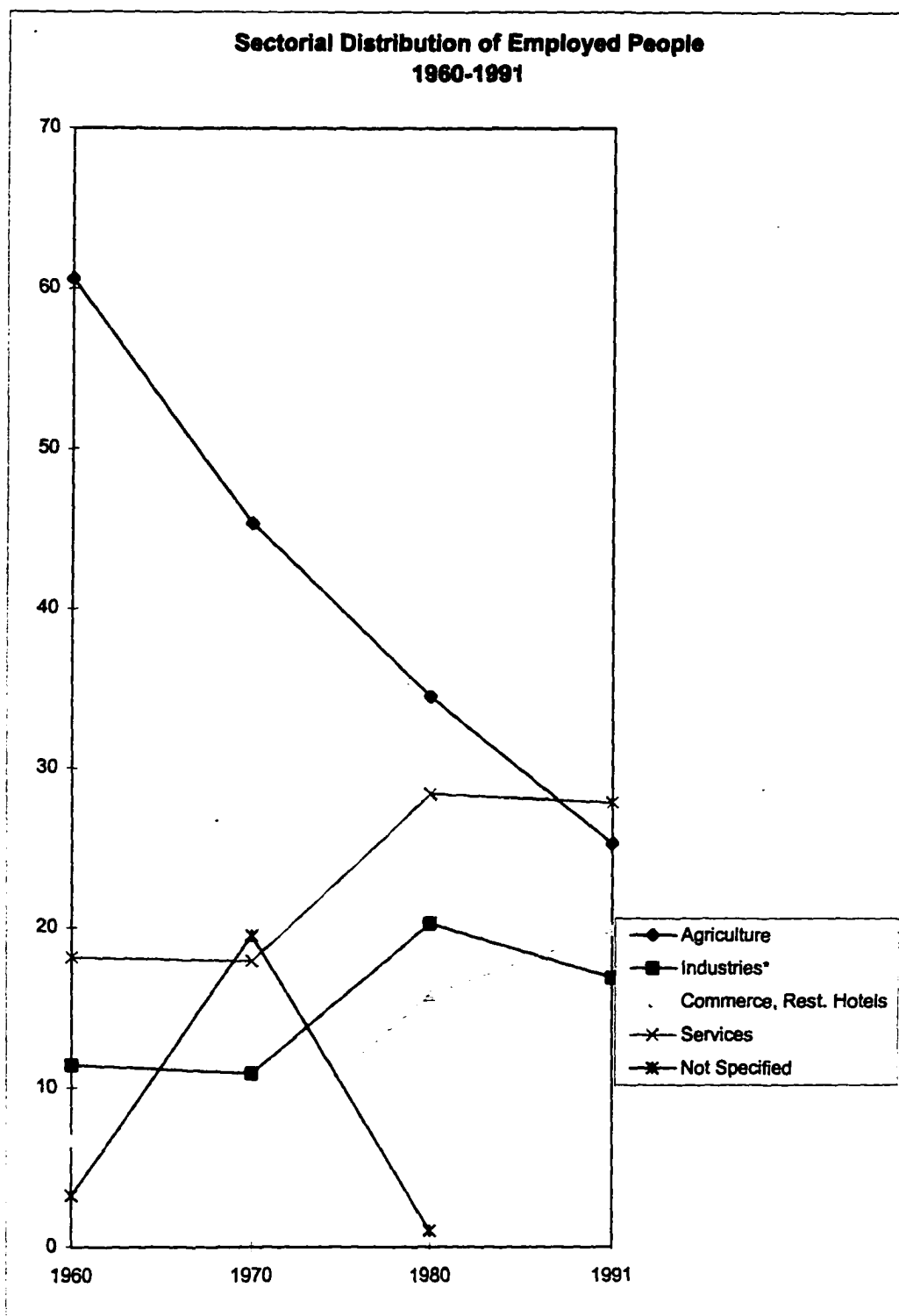
Monthly Income from PT Job: \$200.00

Monthly Distribution:

Rent:	400
Groceries:	350
Misc.	150
ConEd:	35
Phone:	50
Remittance:	<u>40</u>

Total Monthly Expenses: 1,025.00**Total Annual Income: \$13,900.00**

Source: Personal Interview



* Includes manufacturing, construction, mining, and electricity.

Source: Ramírez 1993.

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