

Catholic Heritage as a Dimension of Ethno-Racial Status in the Dominican Republic
(Extended Abstract)

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“El vudú, la santería, las supersticiones africanas están desarraigando a la religión católica, distintivo, como la lengua y raza, de nuestra nacionalidad.”

“Los obispos subrayaban que de ese ‘derecho primordial’ brotan los otros: a formar una familia, el derecho al trabajo, al comercio, a la inmigración...”

Mario Vargas Llosa ([2000] 2005), *La Fiesta del Chivo*

Catholicism is undoubtedly at the foundation of Latin American mainstream cultures, values, and norms. Inherited from Spanish and Portuguese colonialisms, Catholicism partially but meaningfully represents the European legacy that situates Latin American societies into the Western world. Catholicism brought not only a major religious doctrine, but also frameworks of authority composed of norms and policies of citizenship that severely punished nonconformity, and that justified colonialist initiatives. These norms and policies served to reinforce the otherness of those who did not conform to the norms, namely, indigenous individuals and Afro-descendants who were commonly depicted as impious savages (Flórez-Estrada 2008; Portocarrero 2007; Pérez Memén 2010; Casaús Arzú 2000). Although the influence of Catholic frameworks of authority on governmental authorities after colonial independence became weaker, it did not disappear, and it was notably conspicuous in certain Latin American societies.

A noteworthy example of this influence is reflected in the discourses of the Dominican Republic’s dictator Rafael Trujillo, which underlined the role of Catholicism and *hispanidad* as essential components of the Dominican identity for political purposes (Sáez 1988). As narrated by Vargas Llosa in his historical novel *La Fiesta del Chivo* (The Feast of the Goat), Trujillo justified the slaughtering of thousands of Haitians (see Human Rights Watch [2002]) with ideological depictions of the Haitian as a threat for Catholicism (again, as impious savages; see Duany [2006]; Howard [2001]; Sagás [2000]); thus, as a threat for Dominicans. These stereotypes likely revealed the Eurocentric beliefs of the Dominican elites (Torres-Saillant 1998), and were deliberately disseminated through education and the media by Trujillo, and later, by Balaguer (Human Rights Watch 2002). The impact of the diffusion of these stereotypes may be reflected, in accordance with the influence of *mestizaje* ideologies in Latin America (Telles and Bailey 2013; Wade 2010), in the lack of acknowledgment of the Afro-Dominican heritage as an ethno-racial characteristic of the Dominican identity, and in the pervasiveness of prejudicial

sentiments against Haitians and blackness in general (Duany 2006; Simmons 2005; Sagás 2000; Torres-Saillant 1998).

In this study, I investigate whether the influences of the Catholic legacy on Dominican mainstream understandings of ethnicity (founded on *mestizaje* beliefs that overvalue the impact of Hispanic heritage), and on local ethno-racial relations are significant. More specifically, I intend to answer two research questions. First, is Catholic self-identification directly associated with non-Afro ethno-racial self-identifications? Second, are individuals who self-identify as Catholics significantly prejudiced against Haitians? In this study, Catholic self-identification refers to the affinity of individuals with Catholicism whether they are practicing Catholics or merely nominal Catholics. It is possible that identification with Catholicism still serves to validate Dominicans' non-Afro ethno-racial identifications as a culturally legitimate whitening resource (see Wade [2010] for cultural whitening). Moreover, it is possible that Catholic beliefs still foster conservative views that condemn non-Catholic religious practices, particularly those associated with syncretic Haitian religious rituals (Winters and Derrell 2010; Howard 2001). It is also likely that the public declarations of conservative Catholic authorities straightforwardly exacerbate anti-Haitian sentiments (Vargas Llosa 2013; Horn 2010).

Nonetheless, it is also possible that progressive Catholic views, founded on humane beliefs derived from concerns about social problems addressed with the principles of the Catholic doctrine (e.g., liberation theology, see Gutiérrez [1971] 2008), have countered Catholic conservative perspectives to a certain extent. Several Catholic projects that committedly work for the defense of the rights of Haitian migrants may exemplify an alternative way of understanding Catholic praxis among nominal and practicing Catholics.¹ Regardless of the declarations of conservative Catholic authorities, Dominicans probably acknowledge the role of progressive Catholicism as a common feature of the Catholic Church. This perspective is also imaginatively portrayed by Vargas Llosa in *La Fiesta del Chivo*, who attributed to a Catholic character an elaborated justification for conspiring against Trujillo based on progressive Catholic views.

In order to answer the aforementioned research questions, I use a framework that explains ethno-racial status as a multidimensional individual-level condition in contexts of Latin

¹ See, for instance, <http://www.ocasha-ccs.org/proyectos/proyecto-del-servicio-jesuita-refugiados-y-migrantes-en-jimaní-república-dominicana>.

American mestizaje (Paredes 2013; Paredes and Rodriguez 2014). Instead of conceptualizing race as a one-dimensional, fixed characteristic that can be adequately captured by a single survey measure, I argue that individual-level ethno-racial status should be understood as a set of concurrent dimensions. By dealing with the multidimensionality of ethno-racial status, I also address issues of ethno-racial fluidity regularly attributed to boundary crossing in mestizaje contexts (see Telles and Sue [2009]). I identify three dimensions of ethno-racial status: ethno-racial agency, phenotype, and ancestry. Ethno-racial agency refers to the negotiation of a mainstream ethno-racial identity in everyday interaction. Phenotype and ancestry are the cultural resources that individuals in contexts of mestizaje use to succeed in the negotiation. In the Dominican Republic, Catholic affiliation may serve as a legitimate cultural resource to avoid a non-mainstream ethno-racial classification by indirectly attributing to ancestry a Hispanic mainstream heritage. While Dominican ethno-racial schemas are certainly complex and dynamic (Roth 2013; Sidanius, Peña, and Sawyer 2001), I differentiate as non-mainstream ethno-racial identifications that explicitly ascribe Afro characteristics such as *negro* and *Afro-Dominicano* from those that explicitly or implicitly refer to an ethno-racial mestizo (understood as mixed-race) or whiter conditions such as *indio*, *mulato*, and *jabao*.

In this study, I answer the research questions using two data sets: the 2010 America's Barometer by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), a national probability sample of 1,500 adult Dominicans; and the San Benito survey (Rodriguez, Sana, and Sisk [forthcoming]; Weinreb, Sana, and Stecklov 2011), a regional, experimental random sample of 1,207 adult women. San Benito (fictitious name) is a small urban area in the Northeastern Dominican sierra relatively close to the Haitian border, where, according to the local news, the Haitian presence could be threatening local Dominicans. Both surveys gather skin color data using the LAPOP palette, and ethno-racial self-identification data: LAPOP with a limited number of categorical options, and San Benito with an open question that I recoded according to the non-mainstream criterion mentioned above.

My first dependent variable is a dummy variable that identifies non-Afro ethno-racial self-identifications with respect to Afro self-identifications. I use logistic regression models predicting non-Afro self-identifications to examine the effect of Catholic self-identification net of the effect of skin color as a cultural indicator of ancestry, and net of the effect of other control variables (see Table 1) such as age and the effects of the characteristics of interviewers

(Villarreal 2010; Weinreb 2006).² My second and third dependent variables measure two dimensions of national-level prejudice against Haitians in the LAPOP survey. (2) Are Dominicans against the Dominican citizenship of Dominican Republic-Born children of Haitian immigrants? (3) Are Dominicans against work visas for undocumented Haitians? I examine the association of Catholic identification with these dependent variables using logistic regression models controlling for ethno-racial status (ethno-racial self-identification and skin color of respondents), age, region, female and rural, as well as for sex of interviewer (see Table 2).³ My fourth and fifth dependent variables measure prejudice and discrimination against Haitians in San Benito, respectively. (4) Is your opinion about Haitians negative?⁴ (5) Do you avoid Haitians if possible? I examine the association of Catholic self-identification with these dependent variables using logistic regression models controlling for ethno-racial status (ethno-racial self-identification and skin color of respondents), age, and insider interviewer (see Table 3). I sequentially incorporate a dummy variable to control for attendance to religious services, and then categorical variables for educational attainment in every regression model in order to examine the association of Catholic self-identification with every dependent variable net of the effects of the added independent variables.

Unexpectedly, I found no evidence to suggest that Catholic self-identification is directly associated with non-Afro Dominican ethno-racial self-identifications at the national level. It is noteworthy that, at the national level, only skin color seems to be a significant influence of ethno-racial self-identification. Unlike other mestizaje contexts, education is not significantly associated with a mainstream identification associated with mestizaje (Paredes and Rodriguez 2014). However, the association of Catholic self-identification and non-Afro ethno-racial self-identifications is positive and significant in San Benito (see Table 1). Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that individuals who self-identify as Catholics are significantly prejudiced

² I previously examined the effects of interviewer characteristics on skin color categorization using regression analysis (Villarreal 2010). I controlled for interviewer characteristics that were significantly associated with skin color categorization in the analyses presented in this study: sex of interviewer with LAPOP, and insider interviewer with San Benito (Weinreb 2006).

³ I initially ran a factor analysis to examine whether these variables represent a single dimension, but the analysis did not suggest a unique underlying dimension. Then, I separately predicted prejudice against children of Haitian immigrants, and against work visas for undocumented Haitians using ordered logistic regression models (both outcome variables were non-normally distributed). These models, however, did not satisfy the proportional odds assumption even after I collapsed the number of categories in different ways. Therefore, I opted to dichotomize these variables. Initially 1 meant strongly disagree, and 7 meant strongly agree for each variable. Then, I recoded 5, 6, 7 as zero (agree), and 1, 2, 3, 4 as 1 (do not agree).

⁴ I dichotomized this variable with no negative as the reference category.

against Haitians at the national level and in San Benito. Although the association of Catholic self-identification with the disapproval of citizenship for Dominican Republic-Born children of Haitian immigrants is not significant (possibly because of the emphasis of Catholicism on family unity), Dominicans who self-identify as Catholic have greater odds of being against work visas for undocumented Haitians compared with non-Catholics (see Table 2). Similarly, individuals who self-identify as Catholic in San Benito have greater odds of being prejudiced against Haitians, and of avoiding Haitians if possible (see Table 3). These findings reveal the relevance of the influence of Catholic heritage on ethno-racial self-identification, and on anti-Haitian sentiment, which should be openly addressed by local authorities, and by the leaders of Dominican progressive Catholicism.

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Table 1. Coefficients (Odds Ratios) of Logistic Regression Models Predicting National-Level (Models 1a, 2a, 3a, 4a) and Regional-Level (Models 1b, 2b, 3b, 4b for San Benito) Non-Afro Self-Identification

Variables	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 3a	Model 3b	Model 4a	Model 4b
Respondents' Skin Color	0.423*** (0.03)	0.415*** (0.06)	0.422*** (0.03)	0.420*** (0.06)	0.422*** (0.03)	0.420*** (0.06)	0.414*** (0.03)	0.401*** (0.06)
Age	0.995 (0.01)	1.028* (0.01)	0.993 (0.01)	1.025* (0.01)	0.994 (0.01)	1.024* (0.01)	0.991 (0.01)	1.026+ (0.01)
Catholic Self-Identification			1.358 (0.31)	1.892* (0.52)	1.351 (0.30)	1.929* (0.56)	1.352 (0.30)	1.767* (0.49)
Attendance at Religious Services					0.741 (0.19)	1.105 (0.28)	0.742 (0.19)	1.129 (0.29)
Educational Attainment								
Incomplete Primary Education or Less							1.866 (0.81)	2.301* (0.86)
Complete Primary and Incomplete Secondary Education							1.991+ (0.83)	1.808 (0.68)
Complete Secondary Education							1.345 (0.66)	2.205* (0.84)
Some University or Technical Degree							1.695 (0.87)	1.814 (0.73)
Complete University or More							–	–
Female Interviewer (Models 1a, 2a, 3a, 4a) or Insider Interviewer (Models 1b, 2b, 3b, 4b)	0.763 (0.16)	0.804 (0.25)	0.775 (0.16)	0.774 (0.24)	0.746 (0.14)	0.777 (0.24)	0.743 (0.15)	0.814 (0.26)
Log-Pseudolikelihood	-355.77	-261.23	-354.66	-259.24	-353.57	-259.16	-351.77	-256.36
N	1455	1144	1455	1144	1455	1144	1455	1144

Notes: Robust standard errors adjusted for within-interviewer clustering are in parentheses. Dashes indicate reference categories. Estimated coefficients (odds ratios) of region (Metropolitan area without Santo Domingo, North, East, and South with Santo Domingo as the reference category), rural, and female in Models 1a, 2a, 3a, and 4a, are omitted to save space. These effects are not statistically significant ($p < .05$). Reference of attendance at religious services is attends three times a month or less.

+ $p < .1$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

Table 2. Coefficients (Odds Ratios) of Logistic Regression Models Predicting National-Level Prejudice against Haitians

Variables	Against:	(1) Dominican Republic-Born Children of Haitian Immigrants Receiving Citizenship				(2) Undocumented Haitians Receiving Work Visas			
		Model 5a	Model 6a	Model 7a	Model 8a	Model 9a	Model 10a	Model 11a	Model 12a
		Non-Afro Ethnic Identification	2.039*** (0.36)	2.046*** (0.36)	2.045*** (0.36)	1.990*** (0.36)	1.937** (0.43)	1.893** (0.43)	1.872** (0.43)
Respondents' Skin Color	1.100* (0.04)	1.101* (0.04)	1.101* (0.04)	1.074+ (0.04)	1.078 (0.05)	1.073 (0.05)	1.077 (0.05)	1.059 (0.05)	
Age	1.009* (0.004)	1.009* (0.004)	1.010* (0.004)	1.002 (0.005)	1.004 (0.003)	1.002 (0.003)	1.003 (0.003)	1.001 (0.003)	
Catholic Self-Identification		0.959 (0.10)	0.959 (0.10)	0.941 (0.09)		1.418*** (0.14)	1.414*** (0.14)	1.382*** (0.13)	
Attendance at Religious Services				0.994 (0.10)	0.980 (0.10)		0.773* (0.09)	0.768* (0.09)	
Educational Attainment									
Incomplete Primary Education or Less				–				–	
Complete Primary and Incomplete Secondary Education				0.706** (0.08)				1.035 (0.11)	
Complete Secondary Education				0.410*** (0.08)				0.747+ (0.13)	
Some University or Technical Degree				0.583** (0.12)				0.650* (0.11)	
Complete University or More				0.493*** (0.10)				0.636+ (0.17)	
Female Interviewer		1.123 (0.14)	1.120 (0.14)	1.120 (0.14)	1.119 (0.15)	0.896 (0.12)	0.913 (0.12)	0.906 (0.12)	0.904 (0.12)

(continues)

Table 2, continued

Variables	Against:	(1) Dominican Republic-Born Children of Haitian Immigrants Receiving Citizenship				(2) Undocumented Haitians Receiving Work Visas			
		Model 5a	Model 6a	Model 7a	Model 8a	Model 9a	Model 10a	Model 11a	Model 12a
Region									
Santo Domingo		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Metropolitan Area (without Santo Domingo)		1.464+	1.470+	1.470+	1.516*	1.130	1.097	1.114	1.167
		(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.30)	(0.26)	(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.28)
North		1.804**	1.818**	1.818**	1.740**	1.745**	1.636*	1.636*	1.600*
		(0.36)	(0.36)	(0.36)	(0.34)	(0.33)	(0.33)	(0.34)	(0.33)
East		1.183	1.178	1.179	1.100	2.109**	2.181***	2.215***	2.115***
		(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.13)	(0.49)	(0.51)	(0.53)	(0.47)
South		1.303*	1.303*	1.303*	1.193+	1.746*	1.753*	1.739*	1.672*
		(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.12)	(0.40)	(0.42)	(0.41)	(0.40)
Rural		1.389*	1.391*	1.391*	1.267	0.874	0.860	0.866	0.830
		(0.23)	(0.23)	(0.23)	(0.21)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.16)
Female		1.116	1.120	1.121	1.109	0.931	0.899	0.931	0.931
		(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Log-Pseudolikelihood		-958.79	-958.72	-958.72	-944.31	-916.55	-912.18	-909.67	-904.73
N		1426	1426	1426	1426	1426	1426	1426	1426

Notes: Robust standard errors adjusted for within-interviewer clustering are in parentheses. Dashes indicate reference categories. Reference of attendance at religious services is attends three times a month or less.

+ $p < .1$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

Table 3. Coefficients (Odds Ratios) of Logistic Regression Models Predicting Regional-Level (San Benito) Prejudice and Discrimination against Haitians

Variables	Prejudice Against Haitians				Discrimination Against Haitians			
	Model 5b	Model 6b	Model 7b	Model 8b	Model 9b	Model 10b	Model 11b	Model 12b
Non-Afro Ethnic Identification	1.485 (0.44)	1.381 (0.41)	1.376 (0.40)	1.302 (0.40)	0.858 (0.22)	0.803 (0.21)	0.803 (0.21)	0.780 (0.21)
Respondents' Skin Color	1.104* (0.06)	1.106* (0.06)	1.107* (0.05)	1.053 (0.05)	1.050 (0.04)	1.050 (0.04)	1.050 (0.04)	1.019 (0.04)
Age	1.004 (0.01)	1.002 (0.01)	0.999 (0.01)	0.988 (0.01)	1.004 (0.01)	1.002 (0.01)	1.002 (0.01)	0.994 (0.01)
Catholic Self-Identification		2.974*** (0.72)	3.117*** (0.74)	3.010*** (0.71)		2.098** (0.48)	2.095** (0.49)	2.082** (0.49)
Attendance at Religious Services			1.273* (0.13)	1.331* (0.15)			0.992 (0.13)	1.021 (0.13)
Educational Attainment								
Incomplete Primary Education or Less				–				–
Complete Primary and Incomplete Secondary Education				0.447*** (0.10)				0.715* (0.10)
Complete Secondary Education				0.381*** (0.07)				0.499*** (0.09)
Some University or Technical Degree				0.371*** (0.10)				0.508** (0.12)
Complete University or More				0.202*** (0.05)				0.443*** (0.09)
Insider Interviewer	1.083 (0.20)	1.048 (0.20)	1.065 (0.20)	1.162 (0.23)	1.065 (0.19)	1.038 (0.18)	1.038 (0.18)	1.087 (0.20)
Log-Pseudolikelihood	-674.99	-664.84	-663.41	-637.70	-747.02	-740.54	-740.53	-730.30
N	1143	1143	1143	1143	1144	1144	1144	1144

Notes: Robust standard errors adjusted for within-interviewer clustering are in parentheses. Dashes indicate reference categories. Reference of attendance at religious services is attends three times a month or less.

+ $p < .1$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)