

University of Massachusetts
Graduate Program in Dispute Resolution

The Role of Collective Memories in the Conflict between Haitians and Dominicans: An
Interview Study with Haitian and Dominican Students in Boston

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Student Relationship in The University of Massachusetts Boston

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Introduction

In the fall of 2011, I joined the Dispute Resolution Certificate Program at the McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies. During the course of my studies I started to understand why Dominicans and Haitians, two groups that have so much in common were in conflict with one another. Instead of blindly seeking a degree, the University of Massachusetts Boston has successfully instilled strong academic interests in me, one of which concerns Dominican-Haitian relations both in the United States as well as on the island. One specific episode in relation to Dominican-Haitian relations at the University of Massachusetts Boston inspired me to focus my master's project on issues that relate to this conflict. During the Haitian-Dominican conference held at the University of Massachusetts Boston, both parties clearly demonstrated how their past historical views of the island differed from one another. These concerns were also manifested during the Haitian/Dominican forum organized and presented by the Mangu club in collaboration with the Haitian club during my undergraduate studies. The event started with two scholars from each side presenting the history of the island during the colonial era, the Haitian independence, Dominican independence, and the Trujillo's era. During their presentations I noticed the level of tension that the people in the room were demonstrating, specifically when the topic of the event of the massacre river surfaced. After both presenters finished and the Q&A started, the level of tension in the room intensified. Several of the Haitian students argued that the information they had received from their parents was totally different from that of what was presented; casting blame on the Dominican side. Students from the Dominican side responded by ascertaining their position on the issues. The forum was

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turning into a debate, which was clearly not the purpose. Some of the factors that led to heightened emotions during the forums were: Why the massacre river event happened; what caused the hatred between the two groups; and what were the reasons for the Haitian occupation. This indicates that the two groups have different historical views about the inter-group conflict history. With this in mind I decided to further explore the conflict between Dominicans and Haitians by conducting a qualitative interview study to better understand the role of collective memories in the conflict between Haitians and Dominicans. In this project, I specifically explore the views of Dominicans and Haitians at University of Massachusetts Boston about the conflict on the island, focusing on the role of collective memories. Since the late 16th century, the earthly paradise and pristine landscapes of La Hispaniola have been open for domination and conquest, dominating Western narratives. The discovery of gold is replaced by the first-world consumption of sunshine and beaches, such familiar narratives have consistently erased the complex and entangled histories of European colonialism. In his book *Silencing the Past*, Michael-Ralph Trouillot suggests that “not only the past remembered but also the collective subject that does the remembering is constitutive of the collective.” There will always be narratives of the past that individuals consider to be history (Trouillot, 1997, p. 16). These histories between Dominicans and Haitians are embedded in both groups’ memories causing guilt and shame from both sides. Smith uses social identity and social emotion theory to argue that when group memberships are salient, people can feel emotions on account of their group’s position or treatment, even if they had little or no personal experience of the actual intergroup situation themselves (Smith, 1993).

In the following review I will discuss past research on collective memories that focuses on the relationship between collective memory and conflict. Then I will provide the context of the conflict between Dominican and Haitians, both the historical conflict and the current conflict,

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and discuss the importance of collective memories in the Dominican/Haitian conflict, and lastly I will discuss the collective narratives of the conflict from each side's perspective.

Why is Collective memory relevant to intergroup conflict?

There are many different types of conflict and they are classified in different ways. One classification is based on how long and how severe the conflict has been over its evolution. Conflicts between societies that have different goals, intentions, and/or actions are perceived as mutually incompatible and cannot be viewed as a unitary phenomenon (Bar-Tal, Kruglanski, & Klar, 1989; Mitchell, 1981; Rubin, Pruitt, & Kim, 1994). These different interests are the cause of clashes that occur between groups over time. The way these clashes are remembered by individual members of the group differ from one group to the other. Researchers must understand the dynamics of how these collective memories and narratives help shape individual, group, and societal identities. These historical narratives are often constructed in ways that neither mirror nor negate entirely the narrative of the rival. Also, events or figures featured in one narrative may be ignored in the other and vice versa (Pilecki, Hammack, Ricks, Windell, Dewey, Farzan-Kashani, Skog, 2010.). According to Bar-Tal and Salomon, "people construct their world in a way that is functional for their needs, shunning uncertainty on both individual and collective levels" (2006, p.1). These constructions of the past are expressed by individuals through narratives that seek to make sense the experiences of their respective groups. Collective memories are the foundation of group development and they provide the group with a sense of belonging and pride that is very distinct from other groups. These distinctions are what separate each group from one another.

As Bar-Tal and Salomon (2006) suggest, collective memory narratives do not necessarily tell the true story of a group's past, but rather describe a past that is useful for the group to

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function and even exist. Each group in conflict interprets history to fit their present goals and needs of the group. In addition, opposing groups in conflict will often entertain contradictory and selective historical narratives of the same event (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006). Where one group may emphasize how the event transpired the other group would recount the event, with omission of their own participating roles they played during the event. By excluding or omitting certain historical events and processes from their collective memory, a group characterizes itself and the group's historical experience as unique. Divergent perspectives of the conflict history are influenced by four themes (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006): (1) Each group uses historical memories to justify the conflict; (2) a group's historical memories are ethnocentric, portraying the group in a favorable light; (3) collective memories delegitimize the opposing group by attributing the blame for the continuation of the conflict on the adversary. Often, collective memories of conflict portray the opposing group as less than human by focusing on the violence, atrocities, and cruelty, committed by the outgroup; (4) collective memories generally present one's own group as the victim in the conflict, whereas the adversary is the aggressor (for more detail see, Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006). I will elaborate on each of these points below.

Collective memories justify current conflict, historical memories outline the reasons why a group is in conflict with another (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006). In reality, collective memories worsen the conflict by raising the level of emotions which are then used during conflicting times between the groups. Groups' understanding of past events tends to omit their own participation and actions in the event in a way that portrays their group as the victim of the conflict. By viewing themselves as victims of the conflict, collective memories provide the group with acceptable justification to continue the group struggle in the conflict, as failure to attain their goals may threaten the very existence of the group. Consequently, historical memories also

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disregard the other group's goals, describing them as unjustified and unreasonable (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006).

Collective memories boost group's positive image of themselves, groups' collective memory portrays the group experiences in a favorable light by emphasizing their moral qualities demonstrated by their ability to maintain their existence, while fending off the enemy. Therefore, any attempt by the opposing group to show friendship and consideration for the other group is denied or considered to be immoral. Also, groups in conflict self glorify in the amount of small skirmishes and altercations that they have been able to win over the other. Their group's persistence is viewed as hard work and dedication to maintain the existence of the group. Ethnocentric beliefs within a group tend to attribute positive traits, values, and behaviors to said society, and therefore lead that society to believe that it can do no wrong (LeVine & Campbell, 1972). The rationality of each group's misconception does not allow room for thinking about reconciliation, and their perception of incompatibility prevents them from seeing what each group has in common.

Delegitimizing the opponent, collective narratives portray the opposing group as inhuman by focusing on "the violence, atrocities, cruelty, and lack of concern for human life" (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006). This delegitimizing derives from groups in societies that view their own goals as justified, and consequently by believing they are always right, they attribute all responsibility for the continuation of the conflict to the opposing group (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006). Any wrong doing on their part is omitted from collective narratives or re-interpreted in ways that those acts are seen as justified. However, the opposing group is categorized "into extreme negative social categories which are excluded from human groups that are considered as acting within limits of acceptable norms and/or values" (Bar-Tal, Graumann, Kruglanski & W.

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Stroebe 1989, p. 170). An example of this is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict where both the Israeli and the Palestinians blame the opposing group for the continuation of the conflict and see their actions as justified (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006, p. 25).

Collective memories portray one's own group as the victim, the perception of being a victim develops from past losses and hardships that the groups in conflict have experienced, "The group focuses on the injustice, harm, evil, and the atrocities committed by their adversary while emphasizing their own as just, moral, and humane leading group members to see themselves as victims" (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006, p. 24). This misperception of victimhood is how the collective memories exacerbate conflicts.

How Collective Memories Exacerbate Destructive and Intractable Intergroup Conflicts?

Kriesberg (1998) and Bar-Tal (2007) have identified several characteristics of intractable destructive conflicts. According to Kriesberg (1998), destructive conflicts are protracted, violent, perceived as irresolvable, and demand extensive investment. Three additional characteristics were identified by Bar-Tal (2007): totality, perceived as zero sum, and central. Based on the writings of these researchers, I will describe below how collective memories might worsen intergroup conflict in becoming more destructive by exacerbating these seven features.

Protracted, intractable conflicts existed for centuries and have been passed down from generation to generation. Consequently, current groups continue the conflict while they may not understand the past generation's reality, holding distorted views of the past. During this long-drawn-out conflict, confrontations have erupted and accumulated over time, forcing group members to adapt their lives to face the continuous struggles and tense situations that exist during the conflict (Kriesberg, 1998). Collective memories transmitted across generations, have the potential to make conflicts even more protracted.

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Violence, when the conflict is influenced by different interests, group members might turn to violence, causing people (soldiers and civilians) to be wounded or killed. The retaliations from the opposing group in these situations of conflict might come in the form of physical violence, with fluctuating frequency and intensity, with no apparent end in sight. These casualties cause a big emotional impact on both groups, thereby perceiving the violence as intentionally inflicted by the opposing group. This is viewed as an unjust violation of life and becomes detrimental for the society in which both groups are part of (Kriesberg, 1998). Memories of these violent events are kept alive, and often used to justify further violence.

Perceived as irresolvable, the collective memories of conflicting events and their long term continuation prevent groups from seeking reconcilable solutions. Instead, most members prepare themselves for a long struggle, not seeking solutions. Therefore, in preparation for this expected struggle, members search the collective memories of past events for indications of weaknesses in their defense strategies. This reaction is due to the feeling of insecurity caused by the fear of an attack from the opposing group. This constant strategic thinking prevents individuals from problem solving (Kriesberg, 1998).

Demand extensive investment, collective memories of the conflict provide both groups with military strategies to be implemented for the future. Groups in conflict study their previous actions while in combat to determine what was done wrong for the purpose of correcting their mistakes, in the hopes of applying different strategies for the future. These strategies come with a very high and costly price as guns, equipment, laws and regulations are implemented by each group to protect themselves from the opposing group in the upcoming battle (Kriesberg, 1998).

Totality, as past experiences of historical conflict accumulates, members of each group become totally committed to the conflict. Often, if a group member disagrees with group's views

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or action, s/he keeps their opinion to themselves; if they do not, other members might consider them as traitors working against the group cause. This is due to the belief that the conflict is essential to the basic goals, needs, and values that are indispensable for the group's existence or survival. Collective memories of the ~~conflict~~conflictual past provide further confirmation for these beliefs. The conflict itself is perceived by the members of the group to be about territory, independence, self-determination, identity, statehood, economy, security, religion, or culture (Bar-Tal, 2007).

Perceived as zero ~~sums~~sums in nature, due to their experiences and total dedication and involvement in the protection of their groups, members of the group engage in an all-out conflict without compromising their group's goals. Each member of the group focuses on the needs of the group, the goals and objectives of the group that are perceived to be essential to their survival and existence. Therefore, neither side would consider compromise or concession. Losses are not viewed as unfortunate accidents or tragedy, but as a victory for the opposing side (Bar-Tal, 2007).

Centrality, intractable conflicts occupy a central place in the lives of society members. Narratives of the conflict are central in helping the individual understand who they are, and spell out the shared dangers they face. These members are constantly thinking of how they can contribute or speed up the process of victory for their group. Each side is constantly making decisions such as what new strategy to use against the opposing group. Other areas that help the conflict maintain its centrality is media, leaders, and other social institutions that stand to lose some interest or power if the conflict were to end (Bar-Tal, 2007). How the media centralizes the conflict is by the constant reporting of any new development of the conflict. Social institutions

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function to help those affected by the conflict would lose their reasons for being. Leaders centralize the conflict even more in order to protect their position of power.

The Historical Context of the Conflict between Haiti and Dominican Republic

The ethnic heritage of the island originally consisted of indigenous Tainos Indians (Arawaks), and a small settlement of Caribs, their numbers were estimated to be over one million at first contact with Europeans (Library of Congress, 2010). By 1500 these indigenous groups were dying off due to diseases introduced to their community by Europeans colonizers, prompting the occupants of the island to import African slaves in 1503. By the 19th century, the population was roughly 150 000; 40,000 of which were Spanish decent and an equal number of black slaves (Library of Congress, 2010).

The remainder of the population was free blacks or mulattoes. By the mid-1980s, approximately 16% White, 11% Blacks, and the remainder 73% were of mixed race, Spanish, Indians, and Blacks. Traditionally Dominicans prefer to think of themselves as descendants of the island's Indian and Spanish, ignoring the African heritage (Library of Congress, 2010).

Prior to Unification

In 1492, Christopher Columbus named the Island La Hispaniola (Little Spain). Spaniards established themselves and built the city that is called today Santo Domingo. By 1605, French settlers had occupied the island now called La Tortuga (Ile de la Tortue) on the northwest coast of Haiti. The French settlers known as buccaneers traded with Spaniards on the main land. The struggles between Spain and France over territory, however, induced a separation of the inhabitants to opposite sides of the island (East and West). French settlers colonize the western

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side, establishing the French colony of St. Domingue. Consequently, this action caused the bitter struggle over territory to increase (Lancer, 2012).

In 1697 the Treaty of Ryswick seeded the western portion of La Hispaniola to France causing the division of the Island. This division caused Santo Domingo (ruled by Spain), and St. Domingue (ruled by France) to follow different paths, paths that have affected their present relationship. Other factors have contributed to the state of animosity that exists in both groups' relationship. In 1808 a number of émigré Spanish landowners had returned to Santo Domingo. These royalists had no intention of living under the French rule. Therefore, they sought foreign assistance which came from the Haitians, who provided arms, and from the British, who occupied Samana and blockaded the port of Santo Domingo, causing the remainder of French representatives in Haiti to flee the island in 1809 (Lancer, 2012).

The Haitian Occupation (1822-1844)

The twenty-two years of Haitian occupation which came immediately after the French fled the country, caused a steady economic decline and a growing resentment of Haitians by Dominicans. Historical memories are often used by elites to justify intergroup conflict (Berlin, 1979; Mack, 1983; Ramanathapillai, 2006). Resentment held by the royalist, having to flee the island and losing their land to Haitians helped to stimulate the rest of the population against the Haitians. The occupying Haitian forces lived off the land in Santo Domingo confiscating everything they needed, while Dominicans saw this as tribute demanded by petty conquerors, or as simple theft. Racial animosity also affected attitudes on both sides. Black Haitian troops reacted with reflexive (meaning recollection of past ill treatment by the white French) resentment against lighter-skinned Dominicans because of what they themselves had endured under French

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rule. Likewise Dominicans came to associate dark skin with the oppression and the abuse of occupation (Lancer, 2012).

Independence Era

La Trinitaria a secret group formed by Juan Pablo Duarte in 1838 for the purpose of gaining their Dominican independence from Haiti. This event was caused by the mistreatment of Dominicans during Boyer rule. The difference in race composition helped amplify and worsen Dominican-Haitian rivalry. The treaty of Ryswick (1697) sole purpose was to solve the territorial dispute between Spain and The French. By Spain ceding western 1/3rd of the island to France however, the boundaries of this division were not established and remained in question until 1929 (Library of Congress, 2010). This action created a mindset between Dominicans and Haitians to view each other as irreconcilable enemies. This view is perceived by both groups and is fueled by the past narratives that exist today. In 1844, Dominicans gained their independence from Haiti after the Trinitaria movement, led by Juan Pablo Duarte (Library of Congress, 2010).

Trujillo's Era

Rafael Trujillo came to power in Dominican Republic in the 1930, when he ran for president against the incumbent Horacio Velaquez. After he became president, he immediately created a secret police force that tortured and murdered any opposition to his rule. When complaints were raised against him, Cordell Hall US secretary of state (1933-1944) defended him (Spartacus, 2012). Trujillo committed many atrocities both to his own and the Haitian people. The most notorious include: The Massacre River in 1937 (Haitian massacre), where thousands of Haitians were killed, and the Dominican Mirabal Sisters killings in 1960. Although, Dominicans and Haitians remember and pay tribute to the casualties of these events, both sides

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attribute blame very differently. While the Dominicans blame the dictator for the murders, the Haitians blame all Dominicans for Trujillo's atrocities (Alvarez & Danticat, 2003).

Present state of the Conflict, the Haitian/Dominican conflict's present state is the result of their respective collective memories, their economic struggles, and the political issues of both countries as well as the political pressure by outside sources. At present the conflict is about the mistreatment of Haitians in the sugar cane fields, the citizenship issues. New issues are arising, on 5/7/12 the *Listin Diario*, a famous news paper in the Dominican Republic reported fraud been committed by constructors from the Dominican Republic. These allegations term from the contracting bids submitted to the government of Haiti to rebuild Haiti's infrastructure, alleging that contractors have been paying the president of Haiti thousands of dollars for a guarantee contract.

Economic issues fueling the conflict, dating back to the 19th century, Haitians emigration to the Dominican Republic has been consistent (Haggerty, 1989). The reasons for the migrations derive from the unstable government, and the economic state of the country. Haiti's poor economic conditions date back to the Haitian revolution. For their independence from France to be recognized, Haitians had to pay compensation to the French government. The reasons for this compensation was to pay back damage and property losses to former plantation owners that got destroyed during the revolution, followed by the corrupt unstable government that has existed during the country's evolution, and the constant intervention of another secondary party to the conflict, the United states government, who sought their own interest in the country. Moreover, the numerous corporations that have established themselves in Haiti seeking cheap labor have also aided to detriment Haiti's economy. Once established and resources depleted these corporations move on in search of other locations in which to operate All this leads to Haiti's citizens constant migrations to Dominican Republic. This, consequently, diminishes the limited resources that Dominicans have in terms of jobs because Dominicans are not inclined to work for

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low wages and live under hazardous conditions in the sugarcane fields (Haggerty, 1989). This forces the plantation owners to seek labor elsewhere. However, Haitian's migration was induced originally by the promises of good wages and better living conditions offered by the plantation owners.

Today, Haitians obtain jobs in all areas of labor such as construction work, electricians, managers, fast pace restaurants and more. One of the existing plantation owners, the Vicini family who originates from Europe, monopolizes all levels of industry in the Dominican Republic. Most of their wealth comes from exploitation of not only Haitian workers, but Dominicans as well. They control shares in banking, construction, and exporting of goods out of the country. The Vicini Family is one of the three largest groups which owns 75% of the land: the State Sugar Council (Consejo Estatal del Azúcar (CEA). Casa Vicini (a family operation) in Central Romana was formerly owned by Gulf and Western Corporation (Haggerty, 1989). This operation travels to Haiti in search of workers to be delivered by the truckloads to the plantations called "Bateyes". Upon arrival, Haitians in possession of legal working visas are forced to surrender them to their new bosses under the pretext that they will hold them for safe keeping until after the harvest. However, the Haitians never see these documents again. This increases the resentment held by Haitians towards all Dominicans. According to the documentary "The price of sugar", the Viccini family's exportation of sugar to the United States is paid double the price than other countries that export sugar to the United States (Haney & Rhodes, 2007). Needless to say, one can infer that the family is well connected politically.

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Political factors fueling the conflict, border patrol and work permit enforcers are constantly on alert. These permit workers have contributed to the infrastructure of the Dominican Republic immensely. However, regardless of their contributions, Haitians are still viewed as detrimental to Dominican society (Wucker, 2000). Haitian immigration issues which Dominican Republic continually faces has been going on since the late 19th century, when increasing North American capital boosted sugar production. Dominicans have never welcomed these immigrants. In the 1950's, the Dominican government made bilateral agreements to regulate legal Haitians immigration, and contracted 10,000 to 20,000 temporary Haitians workers for the sugar cane harvest. The reason for these agreements was due to the refusal from Dominicans to perform such menial jobs (Wucker, 2000). Another issue is that a Haitian child born in the Dominican Republic is not granted citizenship because the child was born to Haitian parents. This form of prejudice is practiced for, so called, economic reasons by the government of Dominican Republic. The Dominican constitution of 1964 in article 11 indicates that Dominicans and all persons born in the Dominican territory, recognize the Dominican nationality based on two principles: 1- jus solis (born in the Dominican soil), and 2- just sanguini (born from Dominican parents) as presented by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO LEX).

Often times Haitians crossing the river to Dominican Republic are mutilated and killed (mirroring past events). These new tragedies remind individuals of past events, which can add fuel to the conflict. This type of long lasting severe conflict has serious implications for the involved society and the world community. Another challenging issue that is forever present in the Dominican Republic is the racial discrimination induced on Haitians by Dominicans "haitiano del diablo" and "negro del diablo", which translates to "Haitians devils" and "negro from hell". The last one is more frequent than the first. Dominicans have a generalized disrespect

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for the African race (Murray, 2010). The consequences of such negative sentiment is not only experienced by Haitians, but by Dominican blacks as well (Murray, 2010).

Consequences and Conclusion, these continued Dominican/Haitian struggles are the result of the political, economical, and the emotional orientation of both groups' collective memories. Politically, one could consider the unclear immigration laws that exist in the Dominican Republic, the citizenship issues, and the border issues, as well as the constant uncertainties of governance. Economically, the constant migration caused by the state of the economy in Haiti, the unstable government, the recent earthquake, and the lack of self sustainability in the country. All of these increase both groups' emotional orientation induced by their collective memories. This type of long lasting severe conflict has serious implications for the involved society and the world community, on the island as well as in the United States. The constant struggles faced by both groups on the island causes a ripple effect that prevents Haitian and Dominican communities in the United States to work in collaboration with one another. There is also the possibility of role reversal if these struggles are not faced mutually in collaboration by both groups. If these emigrations continue, eventually the country's resources could be depleted, thereby causing political and economical struggles to intensify even further. Therefore, both governments must unify and create a series of task forces to identify the issues; once the issues are identified they must create a strategic plan on how to handle the issues through problem solving. These interactions will provide both groups with a sense of trust, and through working collaboratively, they will be able to understand each other.

The Importance of Collective Memories in Dominican/Haitians Conflict

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Collective memories and narratives on Hispaniola are important factors that help sustain the existing conflict between Dominicans and Haitians in the island of La Hispaniola today. The anthropology of Collective memory of both, Dominicans and Haitians presume that they know the history of their ethnicity, religion and national origin of the group to which they belong. Their historical memories include details and interpretations of past historical events that they did not personally experience. However, these historical memories are important key elements for both groups. It allows individuals to travel through time and collect data from past events and combine them with new ideas in the present, regardless of accuracy. Political leaders and rulers are aware of this knowledge and often use it to their advantage. For example, the dictator Trujillo was always commemorating himself, and dictating what textbooks were to be used in schools centered around his beliefs and hatred against Haitians, in order to create a space to build the Dominican national identity.

Dominicans Collective Memory

In actuality, Dominican collective memories are still influencing relations with their Haitian's neighbors, how they feel and act towards Haitians derives from the Haitian's occupation of the island and the subsequent Dominican independence. At the university, these feelings are not as strong as on the island, nevertheless they are still there. Antagonizing feelings have been caused by two factors; the first is the suffering and oppression endured by Dominicans, the other is the sense of pride that Dominicans hold by managing to gain their own independence. These stories are constantly told to the younger generation of Dominicans by their parents. Those harbored resentments steamed from the treatment received by Haitians during the occupation, which are still held by older generations of Dominicans, seem to influence the way that younger generations of Dominicans interact with Haitians today. Also, there is the slight

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difference in skin color between the two groups; Dominicans have this notion that their heritage comes from Spain thereby negating their African ancestry. This causes friction between Dominicans and Haitians because the latter is constantly reminding them of this ancestry. Not to mention the class struggle that exists between Dominicans themselves (Sagas, 1993). Most Dominicans feel that Haitians could assume more responsibilities to solve their own issues instead of leaving their home land and migrating to work in the Dominican Republic. One of the Dominican participant mentioned that Haitians should stay in their own country and deal with their own problems instead of bringing those problems with them to the Dominican Republic. Dominicans are very prideful and they do not see those traits in their Haitian neighbors. The collective memories of Dominicans originates from Haiti's invasion of the Dominican Republic because during this occupation president Boyer, ruler of Haiti, appropriated all public property such as churches and plantations owned by the Dominican peasants and white elites. This action accentuated Dominicans' collective memories even more. The oppression that followed the Haitian occupation helped build the narratives that are passed down from generation to generation, to the extent that contemporary Dominican society negates their African ancestry (Sagas, 1993). The Dominican collective memories' emotional orientation is constantly regenerated by these narratives, how these narratives are recounted in the University is when families, friends or the media discuss current events that are happening on the island. In view of the findings these narratives get renewed on the island by the constant struggles of both groups competing for jobs, and the continuous migration of Haitians to the Dominican Republic, causing frictions between both groups.

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Haitians Collective Memories, the Haitians believe that Dominicans think that they

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are superior to them and that is why Dominicans are constantly looking down on Haitians. Similar to Dominicans beliefs, Some Haitians perceive that the reason for this superiority comes from the Dominican belief that their national origin comes from Spain, while neglecting their African ancestry. In addition, the Haitian believes that Dominicans never understood why there was a need for the total occupation of the island in order to prevent further invasion from outside. The Haitian collective memories is revived every time a Haitian crosses the river of bones (Massacre River), an event that each Haitian living in the Dominican Republic deals with during their daily activities. Today, within the University of Massachusetts Boston, Haitians are in constant discussion of current events that are happening on the island. These current events are compared to past events. Haitians learn about past historical events through friends and the media. The present negative perceptions against Dominicans are those angry complaints about abusive treatments that dominate Haitian (and international) discourse, both about the Haitian's past itself and the relations with the Dominican Republic (Murray, 2010). In Haiti, Haitians that have never been to the Dominican Republic have angry denunciations of Dominicans and the way they obtain their information is by radio, which informs them of the mistreatments of Haitians in the Dominican Republic. These radio programs are controlled by pro-Haitian activists protesting abuses against Haitians across the border (Murray, 2010). Their underlying interest is to prevent more Haitians from crossing the border. They transmit this message by depicting the abuses to which Haitians are subject to find if they cross the border (Murray, 2010). Haitians that manage to cross the river into the Dominican Republic often realize that they crossed the river just to be exploited in sugarcane fields, or ridiculed and

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oppressed with menial jobs in the main city. However, the present state of the economy in Haiti forces its inhabitants to seek solutions in other countries; the most accessible is the Dominican Republic. These constant migrations and the shortage of jobs cause friction between Haitians and Dominicans, and this in turn causes problems for the Dominican government.

Overview of the role of collective memories in Dominican-Haitian conflict

The Dominican/Haitian conflict has been ongoing for generations without any indication of resolution. Divergent collective memories have contributed to the ongoing conflict. Therefore, it is important to understand, with clarity, the role of collective narratives in maintaining today's conflict between the two groups. Bar-Tal's (2007) Model of the Psychological Foundation of Intractable Conflict presented in Figure 1, provides a great framework to better understand the role of collective memories the present conflict with Dominicans/Haitians in La Hispaniola. As shown in the Figure, the model contains six layers which are inter-related: 1) *Context of the conflict*: The historical context of the conflict between Haiti and Dominican Republic provides information about the origin of the habitants of the island by following events that led to the Haitian occupation, and later to the independence of Dominicans from Haitians; Trujillo's rise to power and the present state of the conflict. 2) *Experiences* include events that caused hardship, stress solidarity and losses to both groups. 3) *Challenges* that each group has and continues to endure in different stages of the conflict. 4) *Shared socio-psychological repertoires* constitute of the narratives of each group's societal belief, attitudes and emotions and how these perpetuate the conflict. 5) *Dissemination* of group narratives is done through different means including schools, media, political and military leaders, and cultural products. 6) *Sociopsycological infrastructure prism*: Collective memories of

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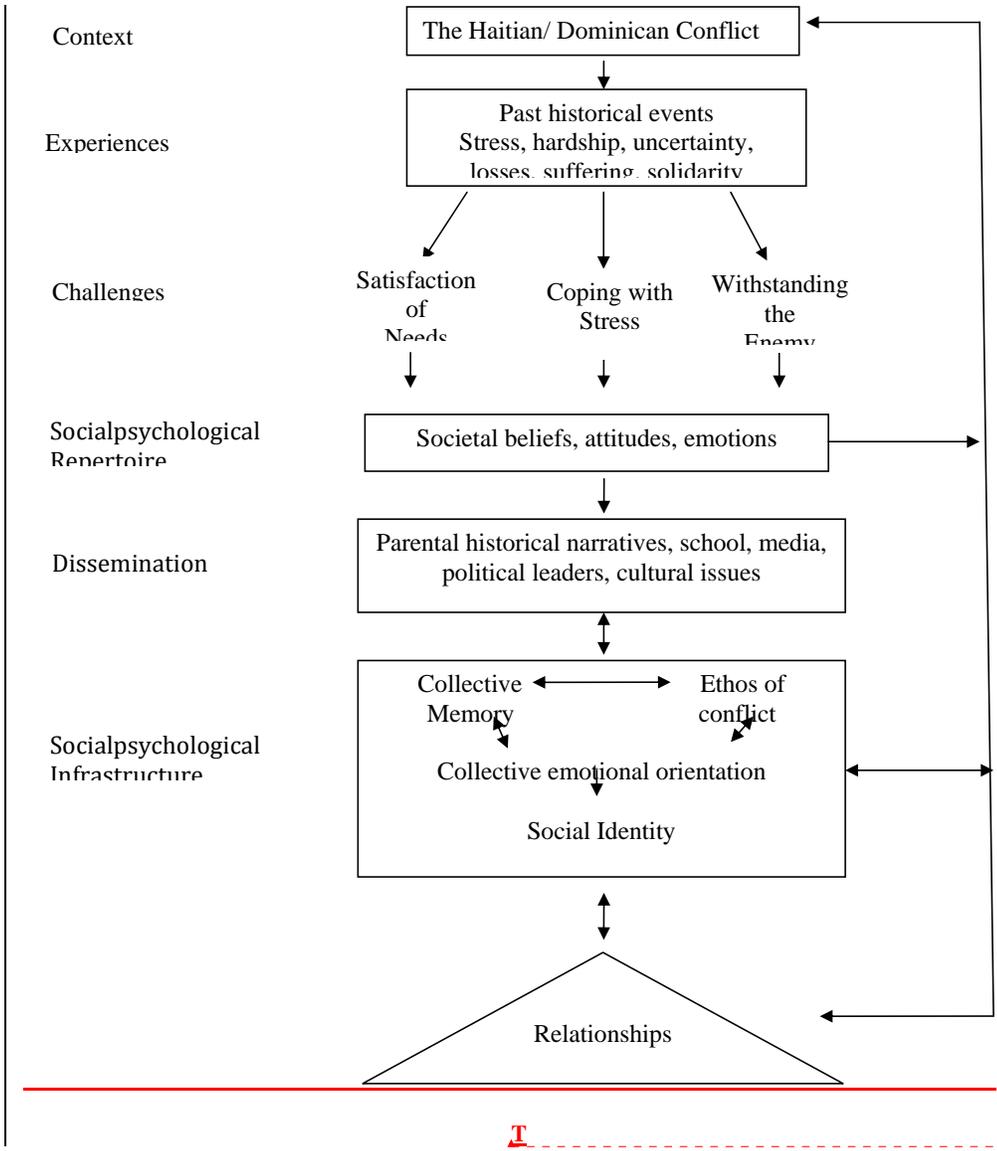
both groups, in conjunction with ethos of conflict, induce a collective emotional orientation of both groups establishing their social identity. Overall, the framework explains how collective memories of the past are incorporated into the present conflict, and how they might influence the relations between groups.

▲ Figure#1 Bar-Tal's (2007) Model of Socio-Psychological Foundation of Intractable Conflict

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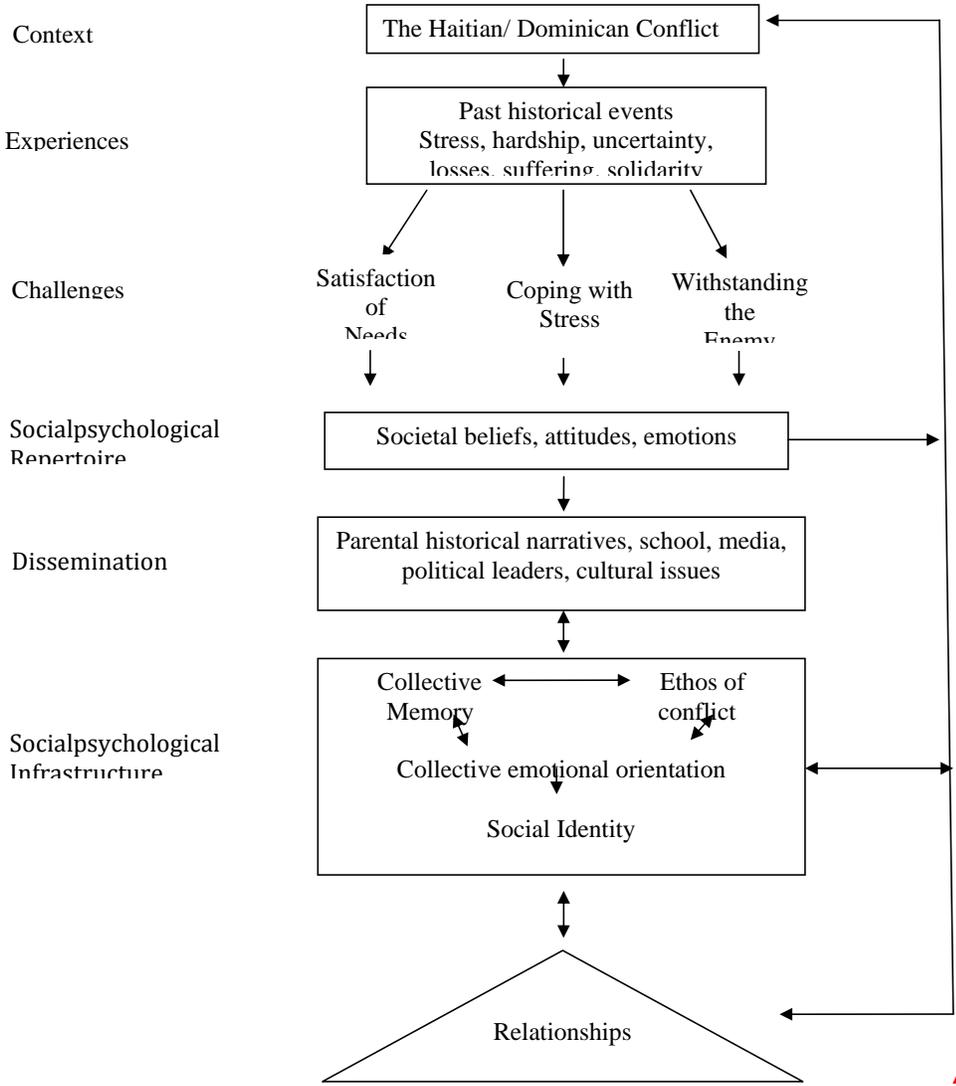


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~~The~~ Current Study

Considering the above review, in my study I examined how the past events that occurred between Dominicans and Haitians are “remembered” by today’s Dominican and Haitian students studying at the University of Massachusetts Boston. The goal was to understand how these groups view their common past; and, how their perceptions of the past influence their attitudes toward the other group, as well as the visions for the future. First, it aims to identify if collective memories of historical events of La Hispaniola affect the present condition of relations between the two groups. Second, it aims to explore how past narratives are linked to the present attitudes of Dominicans and Haitians attending the University of Massachusetts Boston. Third, it aims to explore how Dominicans and Haitians perceive each other at the University. Furthermore, I hope that this analysis will give me insights on the steps that are necessary to begin the reconciliation process between these two groups within the University, and in the Greater Boston community.

Methodology

In this study, I conducted 15 semi-structured interviews with Haitians and Dominican students (7 Dominicans, 7 Haitians, and 1 of both Haitian and Dominican origin) at the University of Massachusetts Boston. . The participants’ ages ranges from 19 to 42 years old. There were eight males (four Haitians, three Dominicans, and one Haitian-Dominican), and seven females (three Haitians, four Dominicans).

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A consent form was administered to obtain approval of participation. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed and entered in the software MAXQDA for coding and analysis. Some of the themes that were assessed in the interviews include subjective indicators of the individual's knowledge of the historical past, the personal importance of past narratives, and the individual's attitudes toward reconciliation. These themes were transformed into four groups of questions in a semi-structured interview including questions about: (1) Perceptions of the past, (2) The knowledge of group history, (3) Current relations between the groups, and (4) The prospect for conflict resolution. The semi-structure interview is provided in Appendix 1. Each interview took between 45 minutes to an hour.

Results

These results were obtained by analyzing each individual interview with the four clusters mentioned above. Each cluster is semi-structured to obtain answers about: the origin of the conflict; how the knowledge about the past was obtained; perceptions of the current relations of the groups; and their prospect for the future.

How do Haitians and Dominicans view the history of the conflict?

All four Haitian males viewed the origin of the conflict in the colonial era. They focused on the role of outside factors and parties in instigation of the conflict. For example, these four participants identified colonialism and the Spanish and French occupation of the island, and the subsequent slavery system, as the origins of the conflict. One of the three female Haitians differed from their male counterparts by viewing the origin of the conflict stemming from the Haitian occupation of the island. This participant believes that the conflict was created by Haiti when the island was unified. One example of this is the closing of all schools on the island, and

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the appropriation of land and personal properties belonging to Dominican peasants' and the white elite farmers by Boyer president of Haiti at the time.

In contrast to Haitian participants who viewed the origin of the conflict in colonialism and slavery, the Dominican participants believed that the origin of the conflict was when the Dominican Republic gained its independence from Haiti. Dominicans perceive the occupation and the oppression that followed, unjustifiable act committed by Haitians against them.

While Haitians focused on the struggles between Spain and France in gaining control of the island, and the slavery induced on the Haitians by France, Dominicans focused on the closing of all the schools and oppression induced on them during the occupations. This act has influenced the state of the conflict. Some common themes in the comments made by Dominican participants were the harsh treatment that Dominicans received during the Haitian occupation and Boyer's constant demand for contribution from Dominican citizens to protect the Island in case of future invasion from outsiders. Plus, Boyer's appropriation of private and public properties such as schools and churches and later were used as prisons. The actual reasons were to prevent congregations of those that might unify to overthrow his governance. What is surprising is the difference in beliefs between males and females on the Haitian side. All four males believed that the conflict originated from the colonial era, while three Haitian females believed that the conflict originated from the occupation. In addition, all Haitians mentioned that the most dramatic and important event during this period was the thousands of Haitians killed during Trujillo's era, called "the massacre river" or "river of bones." This particular event is viewed by Haitians continuous act of racism on Haitians by Dominicans. In contrast, to Dominicans that views the Dominican Republic's independence from Haiti as the most important event in its history, and the reasons for the present state of Haitian-Dominican relationship.

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How do Haitian and Dominican participants view the past relationship between the two groups?

Five of the seven Haitian participants viewed the relationship between the two groups as historically tense, and full of turmoil, especially after the Haitian occupation of the whole island. Participants, males and females, mentioned different episodes of violence during this history, including identity clashes, and specific events of violence. In contrast to the Haitian participants who viewed the relations between groups as full of turmoil during the occupation, all seven Dominican participants believed that the relations that existed during this period was one of tension build by the resentments during the Haitian occupation of Dominican Republic.

All respondents agreed that the previous relationship between both groups was one of constant turmoil, originating from the Haitian independence from France and the Dominican Republic's independence from Haiti, which outlines the reasons why both groups are in conflict. However this tensions and turmoil are cause by different elements such as the tension is due to the resentments by Dominicans, while the turmoil is caused by the political struggles of Haiti which causes them to migrate to Dominican Republic. As Bar-Tal and Salomon (2006) suggest, collective memories narratives do not necessarily tell the true story of a group's past but rather describes a past that is useful for the group to function and even exist. Each group in conflict interprets the history to fit their present goals and needs. In addition, opposing groups in conflict will often entertain contradictory and selective historical narratives of the same event (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006).

All participants believed that those individuals under Trujillo's rule had to carry out his orders or be persecuted and killed for not complying with his wishes.

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Both group's by viewing the origin of the conflict from different perspectives it allows, Dominicans (Independence) to justify why the conflict has lasted for so long and self presentation as being victimized by the Haitians. Thus, Haitians views justifies the long lasting conflict (Colonial era, and occupation) by giving reasons for the occupation, to protect the island from future invaders, justifying their actions while showing Dominicans as unjust, and thereby, view themselves as victims. These findings indicate how historical memory is interpreted by one's own group to fit the present. Thus, giving meaning to the life of individuals in a group (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006). This finding leads me to the conjecture that these results could derive from parental denial to address past historical events in family conversations with their children. These results indicate how groups justify their roles in conflict; who is the perpetrator and who is the victim. These historical memories guide a group's direction for the group's major aspirations, goals, means, concerns and images (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006). More often than not groups in conflict have the tendency to allocate blame (scapegoat find someone else to blame regardless fault) on any other group if the perpetrator is unreachable or obscured (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006).

How did participants learn about the past conflict?

The ways in which they obtained knowledge of the past varied; among the Haitian participants, three females mentioned that they learned the history through the stories told by their friends, and the media. Four Haitians males indicated that this knowledge came from the media and by discussing current events with their friends. The Dominican group all concluded that their knowledge was gained by parental storytelling, the news, books, friends and schools.

Interestingly, these responses is contrary to how Bar-Tal's determined where groups obtain their knowledge; he mentioned that sources where one's group retrieves societal

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influences and memories are through history books, education, TV, films, novels, and plays (Bilali & Ross, in press).

All seven Haitian participants mentioned not discussing the history with their parents, this discussion mostly came from siblings or friends. The collective memories of the Haitian group seem to comply with the statement made by Kriesburg, who mentioned that conflict perceived as irresolvable tends to prevent groups from seeking reconcilable solutions. This might explain why the parents of the Haitian group refrained from discussing these issues with their families.

Contrary to the Haitians' responses, Dominicans mentioned that they have heard a great deal from with their parents, grandparents, and other family members. They emphasized how their parents and grandparents view the Haitians in a negative light, as less than or placing them in the same category of Afro-American people. One example of this is a Dominican male, who mentioned: "My grandmother views Haitians pretty much like filth, dogs, I love her very much but how can you change old people's way of thinking?" The discussions that do occur between me and my grandmother are usually delegitimizing the Haitian group. Older generations of Dominicans must justify any wrong doing in their part, and by believing they are right they attribute all responsibilities to the opposing group.

All participants were in agreement with the importance of discussing these past stories with their family, that these discussions are essential, and that they should go beyond that to educate others. They also mentioned that the history of these two groups is important to them just for the mere fact that they share the same island, and this fact makes it beneficial to understand what has happened. These discussions would also bring enlightenment; help them identify with their group and their own identity, which forces them to think of new ideas for the

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future. This affirms that historical memory guides a direction for the group's major aspirations, goals, means, concerns, and images that helps the individual find his/her own identity (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006).

The anthropology of collective memory of both Dominicans and Haitians presume that they know the history of their ethnicity, religion and national origin of the group to which they belong. Their historical memories include details and interpretations of past historical events that they did not personally experience. However, these historical memories are key elements for both groups. They allow individuals to travel through time and collect data from past events and combine them with new ideas in the present, regardless of accuracy. As Bar-Tal and Salomon (2006) suggest, collective memories tells the particular story of a group's past and outlines the boundaries for a group's description and characterization from their perspective.

Under what circumstances do Haitians/Dominicans think or talk about the past intergroup conflict?

Two Haitian female respondents mentioned finding themselves speaking and thinking about the past history when some event is happening between both groups, such as the role the Dominican Republic played during Haiti's earthquake. One Haitian female participant stated that she thinks about the past history when she is confronted with similar issues. Similarly, three Haitian male participants stated talking about it while a certain event is occurring between both groups. The two remaining Haitian male participants stated talking about it in history classes at school or only when approached by others.

Their opposing group, three Dominican female participants, stated that they think and talk about these issues while performing class work. One Dominican female participant mentioned that she finds herself talking about the conflict when an event is happening in the

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Island. Two Dominican male participants mentioned only thinking and discussing the past when confronted by friends. One Dominican male participant commented that he has discussed the past history in classes.

This finding suggests how present events trigger collective narratives of the past conflict, showing the link between the past and the present. These different ways of discussions by members of each group indicates how the collective memories of past events are still embedded in the present generations. This freshness of collective memories with newly occurring events might re-ignite the conflict because they are presumed to be immediately linked with events of the past.

Haitians perspective of the current relations, the Haitian participants felt that the relation between Dominicans and Haitians in the United States is not as intense as the one that exists on the island. However, they did mention that tensions do exist among these communities. Especially when something happens on the island or there is a confrontation between Dominicans and Haitians on US soil. They also implied that both Dominicans and Haitians alike seem to interact in business and while in the super markets, there is a superficial relation that does not reach the root of their actual feelings. Although they gather in super markets and conduct business with one another, they do not conduct social interactions that could allow for trust building. Each individual maintains his or her sentiments and thoughts to themselves, (comment we know Dominican's don't like Haitians) communications are held at a superficial level. The misconceptions held by the Haitians are clearly explained by one Haitian participant. This participant stated that most of the Haitian population in the United States does not have the level of education to analyze and understand what is going on, let alone to seek solutions to solve the problem. Therefore, they assume that the problem does not exist by minimizing it by way of

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avoidance. One example of this is a comment made by the Haitians “My parents never discuss these issues, is like it is taboo.” The participants all tended to indicate the reasons for the tension are actually economical, political and racial in the United States as well as on the island. It is economical because once in this country they must provide for their families and cannot afford to indulge in issues that will lead them nowhere. It is political because of the fear of retaliation that might be brought to their families by Dominicans on the island as well as in the United States. It is racial because Dominicans think that they are superior and would never give in to accepting their commonalities to Haitians.

Dominican perspective of the current relations

Dominican participants agree with the notion that tension does exist in the United States with less intensity. They recognize that the older generations of Dominicans have the tendency to view Haitians as inferior, and that the issues causing these feelings is the constant migration by Haitians to the Dominican Republic, causing the depletion of economic resources. An example of this is “my grandmother says never trust a Haitians, if you let one in your house they will steel you blind” Although Dominicans are nomad people, the lack of job opportunities and the influx of immigrants competing for the existing jobs influence their decision to relocate. Such are the stories told to them by their parents, grandparents and relatives. Dominicans also mentioned that there is a very distant relationship that exists between both groups in the United States and that is basically in competition for jobs and resources. According to the Dominican participants the Haitians here in the United States don’t socialize with Dominicans, and their perceive reasons is the language barriers that exist between Dominicans and Haitians. They feel that Haitians Dominicans interact while in school, but outside of school there is no relation, everyone fending

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for themselves. Dominicans implied that most of these feeling are the result of the older generation's mistreatment of Haitians here as well as in the island.

How do Haitians and Dominicans view each other?

Haitian participants' perceptions of how Dominicans view their group tended to indicate that it depends on the level of education that each individual reaches. They mentioned that education makes each individual see things from a different perspective, and once the person reaches that level, he/she leaves the group behind (Haitians student's perspective changes from that of their in-group). In view of this perspective change, Dominicans do not see Haitians as brothers or sisters; they see them as people who invaded and controlled the Dominican Republic. This perception is contrary to how Haitians view Dominicans, all their comments lean towards viewing Dominicans and Haitians as the same race, the same people whose only difference is their skin color. However, both Dominicans and Haitians that are part of the student body of the University seem to agree that their view within the campus is one of equality, collaboration, and friendship. Dominicans stated that the Haitians' view of the Dominican group is that Haitians think that Dominicans are full of themselves by thinking they are superior. Nevertheless, Dominicans' views of Haitians are ones of having the same interest in the United States, and going through similar struggles. In terms of having conflict in the United States, all participants drew a parallel perception that confrontations arise only when something really bad happens on the island that involves Dominicans and Haitians. Both group's relation in the United States is the acknowledgement that they come from the same island facing similar struggles. However, both groups' implied that these similarities of interest do not mean unity because the past impedes them from being completely united.

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There are times when groups that are involved in intractable conflicts seem to have reached a consensus about a particular narrative, and there are other times when group differences remain highly significant. Example, Haitians believe that Dominicans think they are superior. While Dominicans see the Haitians having the same interest here in the United States. Opposite example, is Haitians and Dominicans perception of victimization? This applies not only within groups but also between groups, diversity of narrative beliefs exist inside one's own group as well as outside with opposing groups (Ross, 2007). This may explain the perceptions, views and beliefs of how the relation of both groups has been maintained and fueled by the different narrative changes that occur every time a new event develops on the island as well as in the United States.

Perceived prospect for the future

Both participating groups believed that the only way possible to repair the damage created by historical events embedded in each group's collective memories is by reaching out and bringing both groups in collaboration to have dialogues with one another. They mentioned that by providing these forms of interaction, both groups would learn to understand each other's perspectives. According to all participants this will build mutual trust; in addition both groups would learn to recognize how much they have in common, thereby creating a sense of unity and camaraderie. This will be a much elaborated process in order to change individual perspectives, collaboration from all participants and the willingness to listen is required; a very important part of the dialogue process. Only then can the reconciliation process commence, changing the relationship between contending parties emotionally in order for each group to envision a joint future (Ross, 2007).

Discussion

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The purpose of this interview study was to examine if past events of the Dominican/Haitian conflict might have any influence in the relationship of both groups after coming to America. Although there is considerable evidence that these themes outlined by Bar-Tal (2007) are found in intractable conflict, no research has explored the way in which events that transpire in the island of La Hispaniola affect the relations of both groups here in the United States. Upon viewing these results it is evident that the themes presented by Bar-Tal (2007) are present in the interactions of the group selected for this study. Although the themes do not indicate an intractable conflict, they do indicate a conflict in a latent stage which could be ignited by any given event that might transpire on the island. Justification; delegitimization, and victimization are evident patterns that surface during the interviews. However, the interviews also showed the willingness of these samples to improve the relations between both groups.

Themes of prospect for the future

It is possible that the level of education in this sample might have influenced the results, because if I had interviewed a different sample, that did not receive university education, the results would have been different. Their gained knowledge about the conflict allows them to rationalize the conflict in a way that is distinct from other outside members of the group that have not participated in a school learning system. It is very difficult to convince those that have not participated in school learning to change their old perceptions of the conflict. For example, the old generation of Dominicans delegitimizing the Haitians. Therefore, some suggested themes were mentioned by both participating groups. Haitians suggested gathering both groups together in collaboration to study the history, identify the problems, and come up with solutions. Dominicans suggested gathering together for both groups to accept responsibilities of wrong doing and in collaboration seek solutions. This indicates what Bar-Tal (2000a) mentioned that

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confronting history and forming narratives and making those narratives available and acknowledge the historical experiences of the individual members of the group is essential to intergroup reconciliation.

Themes of current relations of both groups

How both groups perceive their current relations within the University is of fair treatment among each other. However, with further prodding and exploration both participating groups demonstrated a form of justification for what transpired in the island by presenting reasons for the state of relation as a whole. Haitians argue that the reason for occupying the island was for the island's security and protection from further invasion. Dominicans argue that their independence was the result of the oppression placed on them during the occupation. Both groups' different perceptions give proof to what Bar-Tal and Salomon implied "societies involved in (latent) intractable conflict view their own actions as justified and perceived the other group reaction as unjust (2006, p. 24). This perceived difference in narratives affects how information is handled, and how they are interpreted by future members of the group.

Themes of how knowledge was obtained

In a society, the way that each generation acquires information and how it is interpreted is very important for the future of that society. In this respect, both groups have contradictory ways on how to obtain information about the history of each individual group. These differences of knowledge attainments exacerbate the continuation of the conflict. By Haitians parents not confronting these issues it provides the group with reasons to continue the conflict. The reason for this phenomenon is that collective memories are essential for group development. The historical narrative of collective memories provides group members with a picture of the historical conflict that creates meaning for the members of the group (Bar-Tal, 2007). These

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differences, like Dominicans listening to their parents' historical narratives, might exacerbate the conflict or provide more insight on what transpired in the past to prevent it from happening again. Alternatively, Haitians not discussing these historical events could be applied to avoidance due to experiences of emotional distress or just conforming to the conflict that seems to never change, or negating their identification with the Dominican group. Social identity theory states that "social identity combines identifications of varying degrees with different groups" (Tajfel, 1982). By one group perceiving the conflict as irresolvable the reconciliation process could be affected, and future dialogues would culminate in failures.

Themes of questions about the past

The way that each group perceives who started the conflict is demonstrated in the way that each group blames the other for the causes of said conflict. This is a form of both groups convincing themselves that they are the victims and the other is the perpetrator. As Bar-Tal suggested, groups in conflict interpret historical narratives to fit the present condition. This particular view of the origination of the conflict presents the groups in conflict with reasons to justify their behavior patterns throughout the duration of the conflict, and provides a clear meaning for each group future. However, these differences are the basis for each group continuation of the conflict. The animosity and hostiles endured by the group throughout the history of the conflict is not easily set aside. In the contrary these animosities and hostilities surface at the present state of the conflict, and are used by the new members of the group although they were never present at the time the hostilities and animosity occurred.

Limitations

The limitations encountered during this research process were that the research was conducted with students at the University campus community who are not directly caught in the

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thick of the conflict, participant's wiliness to respond to unpleasant questions, their knowledge about the subject, and their available time to perform the interview. However, if this same research were to be conducted outside of the University there would be time constraints, participation issues, and participant's wiliness to confront these historical narratives as well.

Recommendations

These results do not represent the outside community of Haitians and Dominicans that live in the metropolitan area; it only refers to the students within the University of Massachusetts Boston. These results demonstrate that conflict does exist within the Haitian/Dominican relationship in the University campus community. Although in the latent state, the conflict is simply waiting for a major event to occur in order to be ignited. Fortunately, the Dispute Resolution System has provided conflict resolution practitioners with an array of tools in dealing with many types of conflict, including the one above mentioned. In the large group methods there is one special approach that could address all the issues that the Haitian/ Dominican groups are having difficulties with. The Open Space Method (OST), this process requires less structure than other methods do. OST allows for a divergence process, participants create their own agenda topics, groups form around these topics, and all proceedings would be recorded in accordance to discussions. These recordings would later be transcribed into a report format; to form committees to create task forces that would address the outside community for collaboration and participation in each event. OST would be a very lengthy process. However, "A true and lasting peace also requires a culture for peace, that is, a comprehensive, society-wide system of values, beliefs, and attitudes," taken from the proceedings of the United Nations Department.

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Appendixes