GO INTO ALL THE WORLD: MORAL-SUBJECT FORMATION THROUGH EVANGELICAL SHORT-TERM MISSIONS FROM THE UNITED STATES TO THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

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ABSTRACT

Each year, four million Americans travel abroad as participants in short-term missions (STMs), the religious branch of the billion-dollar volunteer-tourism industry. Rooted in 13 months of multi-sited ethnographic research, this dissertation examines evangelical STMs in the Dominican Republic as vehicles for evangelization and voluntarism in the contexts of postcolonial tourism and the production of sugar for the global market. In doing so, it also examines STMs as important sites of religious socialization for American participants, particularly, socialization of moral ideologies. These moral ideologies, expressed and performed through the discursive practices, religious rituals, and routinized cross-cultural interactions that are characteristic of STMs, (re)create and justify unequal power relations between Americans and Dominicans. STMs expose American volunteers to striking socioeconomic and racial inequalities, which could powerfully (re)shape their worldviews by raising their awareness, for example, of the exploitative working and living conditions behind a ubiquitous commodity, sugar. However, STM leaders and volunteers conceptualize these inequalities in ways that are inconsistent or contradictory, disconnected from their understandings of inequality back home, and decontextualized from broader processes and systems, including colonialism and contemporary global capitalism. The personal narratives and the religious and economic discourses that are (re)produced during STMs shape American participants'

understandings of inequalities and cultivate a moral subjectivity in which they are divinely charged with the responsibility of ameliorating others' poverty, lack of social welfare, and poor living conditions. STM discourses and practices thus legitimize forms of charitable giving that may actually contribute to poverty and inequality by concealing Americans' pre-existing socioeconomic relations with Dominicans. Amid heightened efforts to dismantle social welfare in the US, it is increasingly important to deconstruct ideologies and practices of giving in order to understand why evangelical Christians prefer charity, which provides only partial and temporary relief at best, over other methods that could provide more sustainable and transformative solutions to poverty and inequality. The research presented in this dissertation reveals that, despite what participants believe to be their moral intentions and good works, STMs work in various ways to perpetuate inequalities between sending and receiving countries.

For my parents, Kim and Richard

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Figure 1: American and Dominican participants take an impromptu tour through the batey and sugar-cane fields.

> *¡Americano! ¡Americano! ¡Americano!*
>
> *¡Americano! ¡Americano! Americano!*

The eager chorus of children's voices heralds the arrival of the old yellow school bus imported from the United States. The vintage vehicles have become iconic in the Dominican Republic for transporting American volunteer-tourists across the country. After an hour navigating the dirt roads that run alongside the sugar-cane fields to reach the batey, or plantation village, the bus kicks up a cloud of dust as it bounces along and eventually squeaks to a stop. Outside the bus, the group of children are dancing and jumping about. The bridge that provides vehicular access to their batey was destroyed months earlier, during Hurricane Maria, cutting them off from most of their contacts outside of the batey. A group of twenty American nurses, all donning brightly colored

scrubs, some with their hair in freshly plaited cornrows, begin descending from the bus. At first there is a silent pause, as the Americans and the Haitian-Dominicans come face to face, unsure of how to receive each other. This moment of uncertainty is quickly broken by hugs offered up by some of the Haitian-Dominican children. After exchanging greetings, the Americans begin unloading their medical supplies, as well as the clothing and toiletries that they plan to hand out as gifts to the community. Last to be hauled out of the back of the bus is a giant water cooler to keep them hydrated as they complete their medical mission, sweating in the height of the Dominican summer heat.

The first part of the day is spent inside a one-room church with no electricity. The American nurses assist Dominican doctors in seeing patient after patient suffering from the ails typical of someone who works in *la caña*, or the cane (sugar-cane fields), such as chronic pain and type 2 diabetes. After the team sends off their last patient with a month's worth of prescriptions and over-the-counter medications, they end their medical work for the day. A woman working patient intake announces that they saw over a hundred patients; there is a celebratory cheer. Exhausted, the team leader closes the doors to the church and the team and DRM employees eat a typical Dominican lunch of chicken with rice and beans. As they eat, some of the children stare through the open windows, extending an open hand through the bars to ask for food until the Haitian-Dominican bus driver comes along to shoo them away.

After they finish their meal, the Americans re-open the church doors to the community and head outside to play games with the kids, tossing around a football that they have brought, painting their nails, and carrying them around on their backs. One

young boy runs up to the group with a bunch of small green fruits, unfamiliar to the Americans, known locally as limoncillos.[1] Cautiously, some of the more adventurous gringos sample it, biting into the skin and breaking it off to reveal the gummy pinkish-orange pulp that surrounds a large pit. Through gestures and pantomimes, the nurses ask where the boy picked the fruit, which initiates an impromptu expedition around the sugar-cane fields that surround their village (Figure 1). The children play tour guide, showing the nurses the stream where they bathe and wash their clothes and a hill that they like to run down. An older child cuts a tall piece of sugar cane with a machete and shares a large piece for the Americans to taste.

As the time comes for the Americans to depart, the group heads back to the village and they distribute their remaining items: boxes of fortified rice and various gifts for the children and their families, ranging from clothes and school supplies to toiletries and toys. These gifts are mostly given out publicly and frequently to the children with whom the team bonded during the afternoon tour. The team attempts to give cash gifts to a select few more discreetly right before departing, but they are unsuccessful. The residents have questions: Why did some receive more than others? Can these skirts that do not fit be exchanged for shoes? Did the team have any more soap to give out? The Americans do not stay for the questions. They quickly board their bus, which kicks up the dirt from the road as they depart. The school bus bounces back to the nearby city where the team is staying. From there, it will go to other bateyes in the coming days, and then

[1] The fruit is known elsewhere by various other names, including Spanish lime, *quenepa* (various spellings), and *mamoncillo*.

finally to the airport, where the Americans will board a flight back to the US, not to return for another year.

Figure 2: The old school bus signifies an STM's presence in the batey.

The bateyes where the workers and their families live are like small islands in seas of sugar cane. The more remote bateyes, such as this one, require an hour-long drive or more off the highway, traversing dirt roads with only the cane outside the bus windows for miles. On this ride back to town, I take a break from writing my fieldnotes and watch the feathered tips of the crop sway in spellbinding waves, set in motion by the island breezes. I squint at the expansive sky and try to grasp my current place in the world by placing myself on an imaginary globe. Where are we and how did we get here?

The answer to that question, like the answers to many questions dealing with inequality in the modern world, starts with colonialism and slavery. In his book Sweetness and Power, Sidney Mintz (1986) describes the power structures that led to the increased demand for sugar in England in the 17th through 19th centuries, which fueled

workers leading up to England's Industrial Revolution. The demands for sugar from England, as well as other European countries and the United States, led to the development of the Caribbean sugar plantations, including on Hispaniola, where vast quantities of sugar were supplied by enslaved laborers, first, the indigenous Taino, and, later, Africans, via the transatlantic slave trade. During this period of intensifying sugar production, according to Vincent Brown (2008, 117), "American sugar plantations were among the most dangerous places a worker could be. Added to the hazards of rampant disease and the everyday violence of enslavement were the punishing demands of planting, tending, and processing the canes." Harvest of sugar cane today is still a laborious and dangerous process. To promote regrowth of the plant, the tough stalk must be cut with force by hand with a machete, leaving workers vulnerable to serious injuries.

Sugar cane was introduced to what is now the Dominican Republic by European colonists in the 1500s, and today the Dominican Republic produces over 500,000 metric tons of sugar each year. About 40% of that yield is imported into the US market (USDA 2020). Although sugar production has always been a significant part of the Dominican economy, the country was not considered one of the world's major producers until the period beginning in the years 1916–1924, when the US military occupied the Dominican Republic. The occupation was undertaken, in part, to protect American corporate interests in the Dominican sugar industry, as the US was losing its stronghold in Cuba. The occupation led to many violent and deadly conflicts between plantation workers and the US military. During this same period of occupation, the US military oversaw the recruitment and forced migration of thousands of Haitians to work in the sugar-cane

fields. Haiti, which was also occupied by the US during this period, has its own violent colonial history that resulted in the world's only successful revolt by enslaved people. Tragically, extraction, disinvestment, and coerced indemnity by the US and European countries wrecked Haiti's economy and the nation has never recovered.

It was not until 1924, when the US withdrew from the Dominican Republic that sugar production shifted back to Dominican control. Later, in the 1950s, the sugar industry was nationalized and consolidated under the dictator Rafael Trujillo. Trujillo had been trained by the US government and installed into power as the US pulled out of the country. Trujillo and his government again found support from the US during the Dominican Civil War in 1965. Trujillo's regime continued the reliance on Haitian workers while at the same time brutally targeting them. The Dominican Republic and Haiti formalized an agreement in 1952's Convenio, which brought thousands of Haitians into the Dominican Republic as seasonal workers. This agreement came only 15 years after Trujillo had authorized the Dominican military's xenophobic slaughter of tens of thousands of Haitians on the Dominican side of the border in the Parsley Massacre of October 1937. Since the US occupation and the Convenio, cane workers have been almost exclusively Haitian or of Haitian descent. Some of these laborers are descendants of those Haitians who were forcibly brought to the country in the 1920s. Because of the nation's jus soli immigration laws, many Dominican-born Haitians lack citizenship or legal residency, making it difficult for them to pursue secondary education or higher or work opportunities outside of the bateyes. These factors increase their vulnerability to exploitation.

Although conditions have improved for workers since these earlier periods of colonial enslavement and state-sponsored violence, the legacy of that system of oppression remains today. Almost all *cañeros* or sugar-cane workers are Haitian temporary guest workers or Haitian-Dominicans, many of whom are undocumented descendants of those trafficked to the country in the early 20th century; for these reasons, sugar-cane workers have little recourse against exploitation. Workers and their families typically live on company-owned or privately-owned bateyes that lack electricity, sanitation, and schools. Workers accrue debts to the companies through batey housing and from food purchased at company- or privately-owned corner stores, their only access to food and potable water for miles. The sugar companies, privatized after the end of Trujillo's brutal reign, are now multinational corporations. The companies supply over 200,000 tons of sugar annually to the US, or roughly one-sixth of US sugar imports, including for major sugar brands like Domino. After decades of accusations of forced labor and other deplorable living and working conditions, in 2013 the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Trade and Labor Affairs released a report stating that they had found evidence of apparent violations of the 2004 free trade agreement between the US and the Dominican Republic. Cited violations included child labor, wage theft, safety and health concerns, unlawful overtime, and denial of medical and pension benefits. Many lawsuits in the US have been brought against Dominican sugar companies for their treatment of workers, including allegations of health problems caused by the use of chemicals, but have been dismissed for lack of jurisdiction. Similar cases in the Dominican Republic

have been unsuccessful due to corruption and the outsized influence and power of the sugar companies as major landowners and employers in the country.

Sugar cane cultivated from hard labor in Dominican fields is shipped off to eventually become bags of refined sugar, and an ingredient in countless other products, on American shelves. Completing the circle of exchange, American consumers, such as the members of the medical team described above, come to the bateyes to give aid and help plantation workers and their families survive. The social relations between Americans and Dominicans in STM gift-giving are enmeshed in global market relations. Participants' pre-existing relations, the results of US foreign policy, late-capitalist modes of governance, and the trade of sugar, have trapped cane workers in poverty, which Americans try to address at the face-to-face level through charitable gift giving. Charitable giving and commodity exchange are thus mutually reinforcing systems. STM participants, through their consumption practices as US citizens, are implicated in a system of exploitative labor made possible by a century of oppression. Notwithstanding the ostensible aims behind it, STM charitable giving may be a factor in upholding that system of oppression; by meeting some of the workers' basic needs, it enables the sugar corporations to evade workers' demands for fair wages and safer working conditions.

As we pull back into the mission's compound of dormitories where the team stays in town, I step out from the bus and take a deep breath. The sweet, sticky smell of caramelizing sugar permeates through the air from the nearby sugar mill. I close my eyes as the lingering scent of sugar cooking puts me into a daze, and I momentarily forget

about the events of the day. As I open my eyes again, back to reality, I can make out a gray cloud of smoke floating over the town.

Short-Term Missions

Each year, an estimated four million Americans travel abroad as participants in short-term missions (STMs), the religious branch of the rapidly growing volunteer-tourism industry (Occhipinti and Priest 2014). Offering an alternative to traditional forms of tourism that attract travelers to pristine beaches or landmarks in world-class cities, volunteer tourism is marketed as ethical tourism. Volunteer tourism is designed around engagement with local communities, humanitarian relief, and development. Participants and proponents advertise volunteer tourism as an important and potentially transformative experience for Americans. STMs, a subset of volunteer-tourism, promise an additional moral purpose: evangelization, a key tenet of Christianity to transform the lives of others through religious conversion. As vehicles for evangelization and voluntarism, STMs play an important role in socializing and reaffirming religious beliefs and providing opportunities to perform moral behaviors. For these reasons, and due to their rising popularity, STMs are an important part of Christian giving, religious socialization, and moral-subject formation.

Rooted in 13 months of multi-sited ethnographic research, my dissertation examines American evangelical STMs in the Dominican Republic through which Americans engage in religious proselytization by way of social and economic outreach. American STM volunteers interact, sometimes for the first time, with people from

another culture and socioeconomic background different from their own. STMs involve interaction and recognition, making them inherently subject-forming and organized by moral rules of social encounters (Keane 2011). STMs provide opportunities for Americans and Dominicans to engage across cultures and socioeconomic inequalities. As transformative encounters in which meanings, identities, and subjectivities emerge, STMs illuminate the process of moral-subject formation. Because STMs are centered on the encounter and religious and socioeconomic outreach, they are opportune sites in which to study moral subjectivity, which, in a Marxian view, is shaped by religio-economic forces. Moral-subject formation is the process by which ideologies are conceptualized, learned, embodied, and performed in the course of socially embedded everyday practices (trans)forming the interior subject and shaping moral action or practice (Fassin and Lézé 2014). Inspired by Foucault, such an approach on the formation of certain kinds of subjects is more complex and less materialistic and determining than the Marxian perspective, “permeating a range of institutions and relationships, with multiple sites and modalities” (Roseberry 1999, 44). By focusing on moral subjectivity, I aim to examine “how people (try to) act on the world even as they are acted upon” (Ortner 2005, 41).

Significantly, moral ideologies expressed during STMs are embedded in social structures, including racialized postcolonial tourism and volunteering as well as oppressive labor systems and global trade. Many of the STMs that I study introduce Americans to undocumented Haitian-Dominicans who live and work on sugar-cane plantations that supply the major brands that the Americans consume back home. As tourist encounters at sites of labor, STMs make visible the oppressive working conditions

that have been denounced by human-rights organizations as exploitative labor. Thus, STMs expose American volunteers firsthand to vast global and racial inequalities. In this way, STMs can powerfully shape participants' worldviews, especially the ways in which they conceptualize culture, globalization, race, and economic inequality—in particular, the ways in which they reflect on or confront how they are implicated in others' socioeconomic positions.

STMs involve more than mere encounters with difference; they also enable laypersons to engage directly in the processes of missionization and humanitarianism. Through their participation in providing goods and services to those less fortunate than they, American volunteers come to understand themselves as acting moral agents. Furthermore, the individual's moral agency is conceptualized in relation to divine agency. For example, one participant writes on social media, "We experienced firsthand just how powerful our Lord and Savior is and just how much He can accomplish if we surrender to Him." This passage reveals the ways that STMs socialize powerful ideas about religion, charitable giving, and agency, including conceptualizations of participants' own agency in relation to others and to the divine, that serve to reinforce and legitimize STM practices.

STMs illuminate the relationships among religious beliefs, economic practices, and moral ideologies. My dissertation engages with enduring questions in the social sciences concerning how religious and other moral systems shape and are shaped by economic systems (e.g., Roberts 1995; Van der Veer 1995; Weber 1992). In particular, I examine how STM discourses express religious values that shape and are shaped by

economic values in ways that influence moral ideologies and behaviors such as charitable giving. My research on the dynamics of STM encounters in the Dominican Republic demonstrates the ways in which religion is mobilized in humanitarian efforts that respond to and (re)produce late capitalism. As economic anthropologists have demonstrated, late capitalism is not merely an economic system, but a complex set of moral principles and practices that shape religious and economic subjectivity by exerting an organizing force on material conditions, social relationships, and lived experiences. Late-capitalist policies such as deregulation, privatization, and international free trade entail the informalization of economies and the decentralization and devaluation of the nation-state. Because these processes are reproduced and transformed at local levels, ethnographic research on everyday life is critical to understanding the mechanisms by which late capitalism (re)produces religio-economic subjectivities. Ethnography reveals the ways in which various forms of capitalism have created material conditions that have "profoundly altered…the phenomenology of being in the world" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001, 15).

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, part of a larger project on the relationship between religion and economics, Weber argues that Calvinist Protestant ethics shaped the formation of a modern subjectivity that played a crucial role in the emergence of modern capitalism. Weber outlines values, behaviors, and structures of feeling that Protestantism promoted and legitimized. For example, Weber contends that the cultural attitude among Protestants, held that "material wealth signaled an individual's selection for salvation" (Browne and Milgram 2009, 8). In Protestant notions of salvation, individualism is valued above all else, and Weber argues that this informed

the modern conception of the individual. Weber explains that the conception of the individual had a "larger Christian ancestry," but it was "under capitalism that the entrepreneurial bourgeois self with his urge for self-improvement becomes the bearer of modernity" (in Van der Veer 1995, 9).

Although capitalism is often imagined as incompatible with morality, every economic system, including capitalism, has its own moral system (Browne and Milgram 2009, 14). Counterintuitively, morality plays a crucial role in the reproduction of capitalism. I examine how STMs participate in the social collectivity that organize labor (Roseberry 1997, 27). In trying to fill the gaps left by a neoliberal governance, STMs often introduce and inculcate late-capitalist values, logics, and dispositions. Taking up Bourdieu's claim that neoliberalism is conceived of as a belief system with articles of faith, my research examines how capitalist tropes and ideologies such as "deserving and undeserving poor" are mystified, or made sacred as divinely inspired, through religious rituals, texts, discourses, and everyday interactions. Simultaneously, religious notions such as "blessed are the poor" are demystified, or rationalized, during economic outreach. In this way, STMs socialize beliefs about personal agency and morality. Moreover, these accounts of agency and morality that reflect both religious and economic ideologies demonstrate that attempts to separate religion and economics are misguided and misleading. Contrary to the secularization thesis, ethnographic examples demonstrate the rise of religious practices in response to the introduction of capitalism and the decline of social welfare under late capitalism (Bornstein 2005; Stambach 2009). Religious and economic values are entangled and inseparable. However, the fact that these ideologies

and subjectivities are intertwined does not mean that they do not express contradictory logics, values, and rewards. For this reason, my approach is emic in that I study how participants come to conceive of religion and giving as well as their own moral subjectivity and agency.

Ultimately, STM practices and discourses reflect and re-create economic and religious ideologies, influencing participants' understandings of what, how, and to whom they should give. Amid heightened efforts to dismantle social welfare, it has become increasingly urgent to deconstruct ideologies of giving in order to understand why conservative Christians prefer charity that provides temporary relief over more sustainable and transformative solutions. Significantly, STMs and other forms of religious service and volunteering have arisen as a response to late capitalism, and yet, they often cultivate late-capitalist subjectivities and enable existing economic structures. I elucidate Christian charity and voluntarism by breaking down personal narratives and the religious and economic discourses embedded in giving practices to reveal the ways in which evangelical Christians come to understand the causes of, and possible solutions to, inequality. The material, ideological, and institutional processes of STMs can be deceptive, misleading American evangelical volunteers into believing that they have "made a difference." Instead, STM practices that emphasize religious charitable giving conceals Americans and Dominicans' relations of production. As Muehlebach (2012, 9) writes about the rise of voluntarism and unpaid labor in the wake of neoliberal reforms in Italy, "Morality, in short, allows members of the Left to participate in the moral neoliberal in both wholehearted and yet also critical-complicit ways, and to forge out of

this historical moment practices that are both oppositional and complicit at the same time." Muehlebach focuses on the ways in which morality emerges from existing cultural materials, such as religion.

In his preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx famously stated that our social being determines our consciousness; I seek instead to ask in what ways social being shapes our conscience. I argue that STMs reflect evangelical and late-capitalist ideologies in which individuals are morally charged with taking personal responsibility for others in order to make up for diminishing social welfare and pay. However, despite what participants believe to be moral or good intentions, the billion-dollar volunteer-tourism industry works in various ways to uphold existing postcolonial inequalities between sending and receiving countries. This dissertation contributes to neo-Marxian analyses of how ideology hides relations of power (Harvey 1989; Mintz 1986; Taussig 1980; Wolf 1982), but also recognizes that the heterogeneity of political and economic ideologies in the context of globalization is not easily approached with a Marxian framework, because institutions, such as the state and public welfare programs, are no longer the driving economic forces. Under late capitalism, the individual or small private organization, propelled by a sense of moral obligation, provides aid and implements development. In employing this framework, I de-mystify the dialectic between capitalist institutions and the late-capitalist ideologies and practices that unfold and are the basis of STMs to argue for the ways that ideologies about the world conceal or displace material-capitalist relationships, hierarchies, and exploitations. In engaging in anthropology as cultural critique, I recognize "the inability to extricate

moral action from negative results" (Fischer and Marcus 1999, xviii), or that under modernity, it is impossible to avoid complicit behaviors that contribute to the problem even when practicing ostensibly moral actions.

Representations of STMs

One of the most visible ways in which STMs perpetuate inequality is through the representation of STMs—especially by means of visual images such as photographs and videos of STM activities, which have become virtually ubiquitous on social media. These typically consist of selfies or other snapshots of young white volunteer-tourists trying to present a moral, cosmopolitan self-image by holding or posing with black and brown-skinned children and babies adorned in rags. Volunteers intend for these images to raise awareness of poverty and to inspire other Americans to volunteer abroad. However, these photographs have been widely criticized as "poverty porn," produced by and for a white gaze in ways that commodify and objectify these children, who cannot give informed consent, especially unaware of the images potential reach to millions of viewers. These representations exploit recipient communities as exotic scenery in the American protagonists' white-savior narratives, in which white Americans are exclusively portrayed as the saviors of impoverished people of color. In these representations, poverty is racialized and romanticized, and ultimately decontextualized from the US's role in (post)colonial extraction and oppression. According to Keane (2007, 11), "representations offer a privileged location to a viewer, such that both viewer and model clearly stand apart from the reality being represented, rendering that reality as an object." As the word suggests, selfies are self-centered, both taken by and representing the

American subject who erases or blurs out the world around them. The photos belie the asymmetric power relations in which they are taken.

Figure 3: An American youth participant takes a "selfie" with a young Haitian boy, the kind of photograph that is typical of American's STM representations on social media.

In contrast to these dominant representations, Figure 1 provides a counternarrative that contextualizes STM experiences. It emphasizes the bi-directionality of postcolonial tourist encounters between Americans and Dominicans. For instance, rather than the iconic images of STMs where children are held up as literal props by Americans, in this image the children guide the Americans around. The wide focus in this photograph illustrates that the children do not exist in the stagnant, placeless third-world poverty that the dominant narrative suggests but are positioned as actors who are part of the global sugar market. The image places STMs within their wider context of labor and poverty that is otherwise rendered invisible in the typical STM photograph.

Although the act of circulating mission selfies on social media is a relatively new phenomenon, representations in general have played a profound role in missionization and colonialism. Said (1978) examines the discursive formation of the Orient by the West

as means for power and control. Said traces the origin of the conceptualization of the East as a despotic, mysterious, exotic, backward, savage Other placed in contrast to the West's superior power. Orientalist imagery have persisted from the Crusades and colonialism to STMs today. In the Western hemisphere, the imperialist production of knowledge relied on empirical and taxonomic documentation that was frequently produced by missionaries in their diaries, articles, and illustrations. These missionary-produced representations of self and other often served to justify state-instituted, top-down modernization practices by creating hierarchies of race, religion, and language through classification. Tropes characterizing indigenous Americans as "noble savages" and dehumanizing terms such as "primitive" served to create distance and fundamental difference between the two groups and were used to justify European domination. The origins of white-savior narratives today can be found in the portrayal of the New World in these representations as Eden, or as a lost paradise waiting to be discovered. Artistic renderings such as Jan van der Straet's *Discovering America* contributed to the construction of the Americas in European consciousness creates dichotomous contrasts between culture and nature, male and female, civilized and savage, and modern and primitive, creating fundamental differences between self and other, as between the scientific, Christian explorer and the sleeping, nude native. Images of missions today assert and highlight similar dichotomies: adult and child, clean and dirty, wealthy and poor, dressed and nude, modern and traditional. These representations, such as the depiction of indigenous Americans as lazy, illustrate underlying cultural and linguistic ideologies of the dominant group that detrimentally affect perceptions of self among indigenous people.

Figure 4: "Discovering America" by Jan van der Straet

Subjectivity is shaped by recognition or misrecognition of others and, like identity, is the "outcome of cultural semiotics that is accomplished through production of contextually relevant sociopolitical relations of similarity and difference, authenticity and inauthenticity, and legitimacy and illegitimacy" (Bucholtz and Hall 2004, 382). According to theories in the politics of recognition, a healthy sense of self can only flourish if people and the communities to which they belong are recognized in both the intimate, familiar sphere and the broader public sphere. A person or group can suffer real damage if the society around them mirrors back to them a confining or demeaning picture of themselves. Non-recognition or misrecognition can be a form of oppression (Taylor 1994, 25).

Colonial missionaries' cultural taxonomist accounts of indigenous peoples, like representations of STMs today, served to justify the (post)colonial and evangelizing cause. Mission representations that emphasize difference are circulated to inspire evangelical beliefs and practices at the missionaries' sending church community, with the goal of raising spiritual and financial support for the mission, although typically a

majority of STM funds are spent on volunteers' personal expenses, not aid. For example, in *Nurturing Doubt* (1995), former Mennonite missionary turned anthropologist Elmer Miller describes how he was first inspired to become a missionary by the descriptions of indigenous people in letters sent from a missionary to his congregation. Miller (1995, 22) writes, "I remember the excitement I felt at the opportunity to travel far and encounter new experiences of the sort they described in those letters." Similarly, the posts on the pages of American STM participants inspire Christian values among their social media followers. Although the photographs offer proof of one's charity, cosmopolitanism, and search for authenticity away from the materialistic, image-driven culture of modern Western life, ironically, these images are then consumed and circulated within American materialistic culture. STM posts emphasize what participants have learned from serving those who are different from and less fortunate than themselves. Mission representations circulated back home are also meant to inspire charitable donations to the mission cause by highlighting differences, emphasizing in particular cultural, spiritual, and/or economic need. In this way, STM representations exemplify Elisha's (2011, 2) description of what he calls moral ambition, or how "as socially engaged evangelicals work to attain religious virtues associated with grace and compassion, they simultaneously work to inspire others, to adopt the appropriate moral dispositions necessary to enhance volunteer mobilization." STM representations most often serve to reproduce American ideologies and expectations of global poverty and the nationalizing perception of the United States as a world savior.

This dissertation focuses not on visual representations of STMs, but linguistic ones that (re)produce postcolonialism, often in the form of white-savior narratives of

moral subjectivity. Taking an approach based in linguistic anthropology, I investigate how moral subjectivity is (re)produced and (trans)formed in cross-cultural interactions, religious rituals, and STM discourses (such as those found in narratives, sermons, and testimonies) in ways that influence understandings of, and solutions to, global inequality. The personal narratives and the religious and economic discourses that are (re)produced during STMs shape American participants' understandings of inequalities and cultivate a moral subjectivity in which they are divinely charged with the responsibility of ameliorating others' poverty, lack of social welfare, and poor living conditions. STM discourses and practices thus legitimize forms of charitable giving that may actually contribute to poverty and inequality.

By breaking down STM narratives and discourses, this dissertation serves as a counternarrative. Narratives are one of the most important cognitive schemes that humans have for constructing their worlds. Narrative identities such as those produced by STM participants are used to make sense of self and others (Wortham et al. 2011). STM participants often claim that their narratives "give voice to the voiceless" and "save those who can't save themselves." These claims are reinforced by the Bible, as in Proverbs 31:8-9: "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." According to Capps and Ochs (1995, 13), "Language is the greatest human resource for representing and structuring events in our lives." In particular, language is a tool for constructing subjectivity, a way to give meaning to lived experience and to propose a social and moral order for that meaning (Vila 2000).

Words have constitutive power; they make meanings in ways that have material results. Writer Teju Cole shows how white-savior narratives structure lives through what he calls the "White Savior Industrial Complex," of which STMs and other forms of volunteer tourism are part. In 2012, he wrote a seven-part explanation on Twitter:

1. From Sachs to Kristof to Invisible Children to TED, the fastest growth industry in the US is the White Savior Industrial Complex.
2. The white savior supports brutal policies in the morning, founds charities in the afternoon, and receives awards in the evening.
3. The banality of evil transmutes into the banality of sentimentality. The world is nothing but a problem to be solved by enthusiasm.
4. This world exists simply to satisfy the needs--including, importantly, the sentimental needs--of white people and Oprah.
5. The White Savior Industrial Complex is not about justice. It is about having a big emotional experience that validates privilege.
6. Feverish worry over that awful African warlord. But close to 1.5 million Iraqis died from an American war of choice. Worry about that.
7. I deeply respect American sentimentality, the way one respects a wounded hippo. You must keep an eye on it, for you know it is deadly.

Cole later expanded on this argument in his article "The White Savior Industrial Complex" for *The Atlantic* (2012), clarifying that he does not accuse people who participate in the White Savior Industrial Complex, such as Nicholas Kristof of *The New York Times,* of racism, arguing instead that Kristof does not "connect the dots or see the patterns of power…All he sees is need, and he sees no need to reason out the need for the need." Nor is Cole opposed to making donations. He concludes by calling for more due diligence, stating, "What innocent heroes don't always understand is that they play a useful role for people who have much more cynical motives. The White Savior Industrial Complex is a valve for releasing the unbearable pressures that build in a system built on pillage."

STM and other voluntarism discourses are active political forces composed of "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault 1972, 49) Discourses are socially constitutive of subjectivity and relationships between groups of people and frame particular worldviews. Although they are not inherently racializing or stratifying, they can "help produce and reproduce unequal power relations . . . through the ways they represent things and position people" (Wodak 1996, 15). This dissertation is rooted in fieldwork on the formation of subjectivities and a neo-Marxian analysis of overarching economic and structural realities in which the moral-subject formation process takes place. It is important to examine the underlying and unchallenged assumptions, logics, and modes of thought present in STM discourses and other practices in order to uncover the ways in which they systematically reinforce structures of power. In this dissertation, I use ethnographic discourse analysis to show how STM practices shape social processes. By using this approach, I attend to the ways that STM discourses and other practices reflect and recreate global hierarchies.

Missionization, (Post)Colonialism, and Anthropology

The ultimate goal of missionization is to transform humans through the reproduction of religious doctrine (Schieffelin 2000, 17). In this regard, missionization, including short-term missionization, is a process that involves the transformation of both the missionizers and the intended population. For missionaries, the primary aim of this transformation is religious conversion, variously defined. In Christian missionization, conversion usually refers to baptism. Because religious beliefs entail epistemological, ontological, and moral orientations to the world, conversion entails subsequent transformations that intentionally

or not, and to varying extents, occur as a consequence of missionization. Missionization is thus a broad-ranging, culturally significant process that can be both reproductive and transformative of sociocultural beliefs, logics, practices, and social formations. Moreover, because missionization unfolds within a wider socio-historical context, the socialization of religion is intertwined with global processes such as (post)colonialism and globalization. In this way, transformations brought on by missionization are inseparable from their broader cultural and global contexts. At the same time, these global processes are reproduced in specific local contexts and driven by particular social actors, so they are incorporated and entextualized at the local level in unpredictable ways (Eves 1996, 86). For this reason, anthropological studies of missionization have drawn upon and been informed by scholarship on macro-level processes such as colonialism, modernization, and globalization as well as by scholarship on agency, subjectivity, and localization.

The entanglement of Christian missionization and (post)colonial institutions has been well documented in anthropology. Anthropologists themselves have had a longstanding and complex relationship with Christian missions. Anthropology's origins are rooted in colonial institutions. Missionary agents acting as proto-anthropologists documented the cultures contacted through Christian evangelism. For instance, 17th-century Catholic missionaries such as Fathers Le Clercq, Le Jeune, and Sagard in Canada, and the Dominican missionary Père Labat in the West Indies, collected some of the earliest ethnographic records of indigenous peoples in their respective sites. These missionaries held dual positions as evangelizers and agents of colonial institutions, introducing Christianity alongside European languages and cultures. Present-day research

on missionary-led colonial projects demonstrates how missionaries reproduced the complex organizations of colonialism as rationalized and standardized, and framed colonialism in universal terms that introduced Western hierarchies, divisions, and social categories (Van der Veer 1995, 6). The goal of Christianization was used to justify and legitimize colonial violence, but some missionaries rejected overt oppression and forced cultural change, and employed a more relativist approach to evangelization. For instance, over 500 years before my own research on STMs in the Dominican Republic, Bartolomé de las Casas, the famed Dominican friar and missionary, advocated in behalf of the indigenous people of the Caribbean and opposed the violent abuses of colonialism, such as slavery. In his volume, *Apologética historia summaria de las gentes destas Indias* (Apologetic Summary History of the Peoples of these Indies), an ethnographic account of indigenous peoples in the Caribbean, including the Taíno, from whom my Dominican research participants claim mixed descent, las Casas makes the case for indigenous peoples' advanced civilization, arguing that their cultures were equal or even superior to those of the great civilizations of Europe. However, his account simultaneously casts Africans, from whom my Haitian and Dominican participants also claim descent, as better candidates for enslavement. His stance has since been criticized as having influenced the development and expansion of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Early anthropological accounts of missionization were constructed around a mythical, Other, untouched by the outside world. These proto-anthropological writings led way to the Boasian tradition of "salvage" anthropology, which Rosaldo (1993) characterizes as a type of "imperialist nostalgia." Salvage anthropologists tried to

document cultural traditions by recreating cultural artifacts and practices while these same cultures were rapidly disappearing due to missionization. The missionary and colonial presence, along with the cultural transformations among indigenous groups, were erased in the anthropological production of knowledge (Ruby 2000, 44).

More recently, Clifford (1992, 126) has characterized the relationship between missionaries and anthropologists as a rivalry, in which both reflect “a restless Western desire for encountering and incorporating others, whether by conversion or comprehension.” In contrast to the disciplinary beginnings’ static, imperialist representations of missionization and indigenous cultures, post–World War II anthropologists, amid decolonization and (post)colonial economic development, began to account for the reproductive and transformative dimensions of missionization. Many anthropologists continue to conduct fieldwork on the process of missionization (e.g. Beidelman 1982; Bielo 2011; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, 1997; Keane 2007; Robbins 2005) or within the context of missionization. During this post-war era, anthropological approaches to modernization made several contributions that continue to influence the study of missionization today: 1) the study of the ways missionization is entangled with and reproduces the goals of (post)colonial institutions (e.g. Donham 2001; Eves 1996; Robbins and Wardlow 2005; Straight 2008; Van der Veer 1995); 2) the conceptualization of missionization as a system of power that introduces religious and cultural practices that reproduce structures of domination and inequality; 3) the debated role of the missionary as a “total colonial agent” (Beidelman 1982), including the treatment of the relationship between missionizers and missionized populations as dialectical and

complex (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991); and 4) attention to the relationship between Western countries and their colonies (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991). In order to attend to these considerations, many anthropologists have taken a historiographic approach in addition to doing ethnographic research, so as to reevaluate previous understandings of the relationship between colonizing countries and colonial missions.

These different approaches inform my own research on contemporary STMs. For instance, Van der Veer argues that missionization abroad simultaneously transforms Christianity at home (1995, 7). This is especially true in the practice of short-term missionization, which typically involves young, lay American participants. STM organizers aim to reaffirm or re-socialize religious beliefs of the short-term missionizers, who return home with renewed perspectives on Christianity and their relationship with God. Participants go on to share representations of the STM encounter on social media to inspire and mobilize a wider audience. Additionally, short-term missionization is a response to wider processes of transnationalism, and in some ways works to prop up the current system of labor and trade. Likewise, the conceptualization of conversion as a "radical restructuring of the social universe for the individual" (Van der Veer 1995, 7) can be applied to the STM encounter, making STMs not a discrete moment, but a social transformation that enables new social organization and cultural meanings that transcend the encounter itself. Asad's (1993, 20) theorization of multiple conversions is also useful because it demonstrates how conversion is a radically transformative process that involves reproducing a new religion as well as a transformation of a new moral subject. Similarly, STMs socialize moral values that transform participants according to a late-

capitalist, evangelical subjectivity. As Asad clarifies in his work, the boundaries between sacred and secular is a Western construction, and my discursive treatment of these two categories reflects participants' social construction of religion and economics; however, I make the case for the ways that they are co-constitutive and inseparable.

Increasing attention to globalization's impacts on local culture has prompted the development of new methodologies and theories in both the practice and the study of missionization. Although globalization is not a new phenomenon, the accelerating and increasing processes of transnationalism during the late 20th century altered anthropologists' perspective on culture as uniform and spatially bounded (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 47). Anthropological approaches to the study of globalization more broadly were designed to reveal interconnectivity of social, economic, and cultural processes, as well as the circulation and flow of population, information, symbols, capital, and commodities, which transcend the power and boundaries of the nation-state (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 38). Such a reconceptualization prompted a reconsideration of fieldwork and ethnography that aimed to defetishize global/local dichotomies and constructions of the Other. Relatedly, the study of globalization has revealed the ways that global cultural flows are multidirectional and varied. Although anthropologists initially asserted that globalization yielded a homogeneous reproduction of Western dominance, Appadurai's model of virtual, interactive scapes of global cultural flows illustrate "how people, cultures, and ideas are remade as they travel" (Tsing 2000, 348). Cultures are hybridized in unique ways at the local level (Tsing 2000, 339). The ways that religious beliefs and sociocultural practices are reproduced and transformed at the

local level are important to the anthropological study of missionization. In order to yield a fuller portrait of culture, Gupta and Ferguson (1997) recommend multi-sited ethnography, a strategy that I employ to follow the transnational movements of missionization and to capture the ways that a particular cultural site is interconnected with others within the capitalist world system. I consider larger sociocultural structures while also accounting for the dynamics of particular everyday practices that unfold at the local level.

Anthropological approaches to globalization marked the beginning of the critical turn in anthropology. Anthropologists methodologically and theoretically reconfigured relations of space and time and redefined or "wrote against" culture (Abu-Lughod 1991) in order to reflect and document the constant shifts and unboundedness of culture as well as the researcher's own positionality (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 38). The attention to globalization led to the critical turn, starting such as Kearney's argument (1995) that the study of local identities is incomplete. The critical turn shaped the anthropological study of missionization in several ways: 1) reconsideration of the cultural categories that produce unequal relationships; 2) movement toward the ethnography of the particular in order to subvert the process of othering; and 3) movement beyond culture as stable and fixed. Moving away from past practices of identifying and categorizing culture, anthropologists of missionization now examine everyday practices in order to better understand dynamic processes of reproduction and transformation of culture. In order to achieve this, anthropologists have increasingly focused on missionization as a bi-directional process and have considered the roles of missionaries and receiving

communities as agents. According to Comaroff and Comaroff (1991, 9), “The anthropologist's quest for local agency is often portrayed as an antidote to earlier assumptions about tradition-bound natives and timeless structures or triumphalist narratives of empire and modernity.” Agency, or the “socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn 2001, 112), is crucial to the ways in which individuals interact with sociohistorical structures and negotiate reproduction and transformation in locally meaningful ways. For instance, Comaroff and Comaroff present a dialectical and complex portrait of missionaries and indigenous communities, arguing that the relationships between missionaries and indigenous populations were more nuanced than merely that of colonial agents and subjects of colonial projects (1991, 54). The authors’ approach to agency leads them to focus on the surprising ways in which resistance reproduces colonial-missionary entanglements. For instance, although the Tswana resisted Christianity, they reproduced capitalist culture introduced by the missionaries (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, 31). Following Comaroff and Comaroff, anthropologists such as Van der Veer look at the two sides of the colonial encounter. Van der Veer (1995, 7) argues that this approach will “lead us away from the commonsensical simplicities of theories of modernization and secularization in which modern Europe unilaterally modernizes its others, whose role is limited to reaction.” However, Keane (2007, 3-4) warns, “The quest for agency often seems tacitly to be informed by the humanist assumption that self-transformation is not only a central fact of history, but also a good that exceeds local systems of value.” Keane urges us to be aware that what we think of as

agency has “intellectual, moral, and even theological” roots in European intellectual tradition.

Two more recent developments in the anthropology of missionization examine “post-mission” societies and short-term mission encounters. These two developments incorporate many of the contributions from the anthropological study of development, globalization, and agency outlined above and provide new insights for studying postcolonial missionization in the 21st century. According to Howell’s (2008, 3) study of a post-mission society in his monograph *Christianity in the Local Context: Southern Baptists in the Philippines*, Christianity is not something to be framed within the local culture, but rather provides the context and resources in which local actors engage with resituating locality. Thus, instead of viewing Christianity in binary terms as local/global or deterritorialized/absorbed, Howell (2008, 4; 7) argues that anthropologists of missionization should also conceive of what he calls a “transcendent locality” to mediate between religious logics and sociocultural formations. Likewise, the study of short-term missions emphasizes the missionization process as a bi-directional, agentive encounter. My study of STMs builds on the encounter approach, which considers everyday engagements across social difference. The encounter approach developed out of calls to decolonize anthropology following the critical turn. Such an approach delineates the macro-level processes of transnationalism as it is plays out at the local level in on-the-ground ways. The study of STM encounters, which is centered around the transformation of the missionizers, is largely a break from prior anthropological research on missionization, which has focused primarily on the transformations of the missionized

populations. However, by focusing attention on the missionizers, particularly as the agents of the encounter, the study of STMs privileges those experiences of missionizers and may unintentionally frame the recipient population as Other.

In order to address this shortcoming, I focus my attention to the intersubjective process of moral-subject formation. As Robbins (2004, 12-14) asserts, theories of cultural change, particularly in the anthropological study of missionization, must account for the ways in which values are transformed, which he calls, a conscious choice. Robbins (2004, 14) writes, “For those caught living between a traditional cultural system and one they have newly adopted, morality is likely to provide the window through which they can see the contradictions with which they have to live.” This is especially true for cross-cultural encounters, which reveal the hidden arbitrariness, contradictions, and disjunctures of culture. Moreover, the reproduction of cultural values and logics ultimately leads to new ways of conceptualizing moral subjectivity as a way to understand cultural change (Robbins 2004, 315). In part, this dissertation examines the ways in which people use the narrative function and structure of morality to bridge, make sense of, and seal over these contradictions and disparities.

Linguistic Anthropology of Moral-Subject Formation

The notion of subjectivity is integral to modern definitions of the human, and a theory of subjectivity is thus integral to anthropology and other fields that study human experience. Yet, despite (and, in part, because of) their ubiquity, theories of subjectivity are “too often overstated, obscure, and even dehumanizing” (Biehl, Good, and Kleinman 2007, 3); therefore, a robust account of subjectivity is necessary in order to better understand

society. With increasing attention in anthropology to the ways in which modern institutions transform humans, the study of moral subjectivity—how it emerges, is transformed, is performed, and is (re)produced—has been a focus of recent scholarship in anthropology, especially in the anthropology of religion and linguistic anthropology. The notion of moral subjectivity is particularly advantageous in anthropology because it creates possibilities for thinking about sociocultural change, agency, and power.

Subjectivity is both an empirical reality and an analytic category (Biehl, Good, and Kleinman 2007, 5). The various theories of subjectivity ultimately find common ground in the articulation of subjectivity as a sense of self that is dynamically (trans)formed by tensions between the individual actor and overlying structures; yet anthropological perspectives diverge in the possibilities and limits to freedoms from individual agency and the constraints of social structure (Mahmood 2005; Ortner 2005). For present purposes, I take up Ortner's (2005, 31) definition of subjectivity: a shared cultural and historical (un)consciousness, an "ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, fear, and so forth that animate acting subjects" and are shaped, organized, and provoked by sociocultural formations. Such a definition highlights the importance of conceptualizing subjectivity as being in a state of constant (re)creation, rather than as an innate or essential quality. Similarly, subjectivity intersects with other anthropological concepts such as personhood, identity, and agency, as well as Marx's self-consciousness, Williams's structures of feeling, and Bourdieu's habitus, among others.

The term "subject" is thought to have originated in the 12th century; at that time, it referred simply to a person under the dominion of a ruling power. The concept later took

on more complex forms under capitalism and globalization (Biehl, Good, and Kleinman 2007, 6). From this genealogy, 20th-century debates in anthropology over subjectivity have fallen in line with wider anthropological theories about the role of individuals in their sociohistorical contexts. These debates were ignited by Levi-Strauss's interpretations of Durkheim's social "constraint" and Marx's "determinism," an effort to "dissolve man" (Ortner 2005, 32). Poststructuralists, in particular, postcolonialists and feminists, have been inspired by the conceptualization of the subject as the product of discourse (Biehl, Good, and Kleinman 2007, 8), a position that I take up in my own research.

Current lines of thought are more influenced by theories of subjectivity articulated by Geertz and Bourdieu. Geertz's theory considers the ways that culture, as a socially embedded, shared, public symbolic process, reflects and organizes subjectivity. However, this very position led to the re-conceptualization of culture, and thus subjectivity is understood as "emerging from institutional and intersubjective interactions and as an evolving phenomenon, constantly remade" (Biehl, Good, and Kleinman 2007, 7). In contrast, Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice integrates subjectivist and objectivist approaches in order to investigate how structure is lived in the human experience. Bourdieu argues that, through inculcation, the subject unconsciously internalizes and comes to embody structural positions that correspond to socioeconomic conditions, which are naturalized and reproduced as habitus, a system of dispositions and inclinations for feeling and acting. Similar to Bourdieu's concept of habitus, current approaches to subjectivity, such as Lurhmann's study (2006) of the ways that "structures of feeling" are

inscribed and performed through linguistic and other embodied practices, making the body and language the basis by which subjectivity is structurally and agentively produced (Mahmood 2005, 27). Along these lines, subjectivity shapes and is the basis of agency. Examining the inculcation process using a similar conceptualization, my approach is rooted in linguistic anthropology, with particular attention paid to language socialization and performativity as critical to understanding subject formation.

Morality and ethics have been increasingly called upon by individuals and organizations in the modern world in various fields, from Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to the justification for war (Fassin and Lézé 2014, 1), usually in conversation with what Keane calls "the moral narrative of modernity" (2007, 6), which involves such notions as progress, freedom, and autonomy. Morality and ethics, in their most basic definitions, engage with questions of what is "good" or "right" in relation to what is "bad" or "wrong" and what one "should" or "should not" do (Fassin and Lézé 2014, 3). Anthropologists typically employ an Aristotelian view of morality; that is, what is good or right cannot be studied abstractly, but only in situated practice and (inter)action (Muehlebach 2012, 19). Because morality is a slippery concept (Laidlaw 2002), it is best examined ethnographically as a fluid process of negotiation that makes certain types of action acceptable through the construction of local meanings (Prentice 2009, 124). Like subjectivity, morality can only be examined by taking into consideration the tensions between obligation and freedom to be or to do what is right (Muehlebach 2012, 19). Like other anthropologists, I use "morality" to mean both morality and ethics, as distinctions between the two are often inconsistent and even contradictory (Lambek 2010, 9).

The distinctions that scholars do make between morality and ethics ultimately hinge on emphasizing one or the other, either as abstract imperatives, discourses, inner states, practices, or actions, thus highlighting the relationship between structure and agency that forms subjectivity. For example, Foucault (1997, 262) distinguishes between "moral discourse," which establishes forms of power and knowledge, and "ethical practice," a modality of power that enables people to transform themselves as subjects. In my own research, I consider moral ideology, moral subjectivity, and moral agency. Moral subjectivity is a process by which moral ideologies, or beliefs and feelings about what is good or bad and right or wrong, are learned and embodied during socially embedded everyday practices as a means to (trans)form the interior subject, or sense of self in relation to other, and to serve as a basis for moral agency. Just what constitutes an ideology, subjectivity, or agency as moral varies cross-culturally, and also varies according to individual lived experiences as they are shaped by different social structures.

Anthropologists currently study moral subjectivity according to three approaches (Fassin and Lézé 2014, 4-6). The first approach is influenced by Durkheimian understandings of cultural values that place moral constraints on individuals. This approach has recently been used to understand how morals change in relation to broader sociohistorical processes, such as missionization (Robbins 2004). The second consists of a practice-based approach to Foucauldian ethics that is used to investigate how everyday interactions and practices produce moral subjectivities that are embodied and transformed (Fassin and Lézé 2014, 6); this approach is common in recent studies in the linguistic anthropology of religion (Baquedano-López 2000; Fader 2009; Moore 2006) A third

approach is a Weberian-inspired one in which morality is regarded as historicizing and politicizing subjectivity (Muehlebach 2012). My research is guided by elements of all three of these approaches.

Moral subjectivity, like any concept, can be problematic when it is deployed in harmful ways. The study of morality was long avoided in anthropology because it entails normative judgments that can dehumanize and create hierarchies. Indeed, this is all too familiar to anthropology's colonial history as a moral enterprise (Fassin and Lézé 2014, 4). Although most anthropologists today subscribe to cultural relativism, they adhere less to moral relativism. In order to avoid these pitfalls of assuming moral authority, I take a practice-based, encounter approach (Faier and Rofel 2014) that centers participants' own understandings of morality. In particular, I examine how participants reproduce and transform moral subjectivity during everyday lived experiences of engagement as they are embedded in everyday practices and relations of power, such as inequality and difference. A practice-based approach that focuses on language and embodiment also helps me to avoid treating moral subjectivity as an innate interior self and allows me to explore it instead as something that is always emergent and performed during social interactions. Additionally, such an approach enables me to take advantage of moral subjectivity as a way to explore the dynamic relations of postcolonial encounters, including sociohistorical processes such as globalization, and as a way to account for the individual agency of American and Dominican participants in short-term missions. I take both emic and etic perspectives in order to understand how my participants conceive of moral subjectivity, what they deem to be moral, and how morality organizes social

relations. This perspective also allows me to investigate other questions, such as whether a shared evangelical identity might be privileged during the STM encounter over other social identities, such as race, class, and nationality; and to explore how divine agency is constructed by participants in order to reconfigure the relationship between individual agency and social structure.

Moral subjectivity is culturally embedded and emerges in particular ways at the local level. The notion of moral subjectivity is especially important for thinking about the ways in which individuals are both agents and products of political processes. Moral subjectivity is thus a site at which to study historical change and can also serve as a basis for cultural critique of power relations.

Subjectivity is in part constituted by way of recognition during the process of verbal interaction (Keane 1997b, 10). A linguistic anthropological approach focuses attention on the ways in which moral subjectivities emerge and are re(produced) during cross-cultural interactions, discourse, and religious rituals. Language is one of the primary means by which moral subjectivity is (trans)formed, socialized, and performed, and by studying the use of language in everyday interactions, linguistic anthropologists can gain access to moral subjectivity. Moreover, because language is embedded in sociocultural relations and is both culturally organized and organizing, the study of everyday linguistic practices can elucidate processes of cultural change and the transformation of moral subjectivity.

Although moral subjectivity occurs across human practices, religious contexts and cross-cultural encounters are especially revealing of how moral subjectivity is

conceptualized, emerges, and is (re)produced because religious observance involves a conscious stylization of language (Keane 1997a, 48). Like religious practices, voluntarism and charity explicitly socialize moral values. A linguistic anthropological approach to the study of religion provides insight to the ways in which religious language and discourses, such as prayers and sermons, socialize religious beliefs and dispositions that are embodied in, and (trans)form, moral subjectivity (Geertz 1973, 112). In the Durkheimian tradition, religion is a system of ideas that individuals use to organize social relations. For instance, religions outline moral codes, which are legitimized by texts or beliefs that articulate a human subjectivity in relation to a cosmological order. In a religious context, subjective experience can be extended beyond the individual to a collective subjectivity or in conjunction with the divine. Religion, like economic practices, fosters a collective consciousness that maintains social solidarity. Together, the studies of religion and charitable giving offer key insights to the study of moral-subject formation because religious and economic ideologies and practices (re)form individuals as moral subjects (Bialecki 2008). Because of the dual goals of religious giving—to provide goods and services and to evangelize or strengthen religious beliefs—religious values are inseparable from economic ideologies. That is, late-capitalist giving practices are organized by, and understood to be part of, religion. In faith-based charitable exchanges that take place during STMs, participant roles that are inculcated through preaching, such as “more blessed to give than to receive,” become charged with neoliberal tropes of personhood, such as the enterprising self.

Ethnographic research driven by two paradigmatic orientations within linguistic anthropology, language socialization and performativity, are especially revealing of the ways in which moral subjectivities emerge, are (re)produced, and are (trans)formed. The language socialization and performance orientations are mutually integrative, and I also integrate other paradigms, including narrative and language ideology. Approaches in language socialization and the anthropology of religion illuminate the other in the study of moral subjectivity (Fader 2011). A fundamental premise of language socialization is that in the process of acquiring a language the novice also acquires cultural meanings, social expectations, norms, and values that enable them to participate in that community. In a religious context, language socialization occurs during narratives, rituals, and everyday interactions that reproduce values (Fader 2011). The language socialization paradigm is predicated on the ways in which micro-level interactions are shaped by macro-level processes. Therefore, my study on the production of subjectivity takes into account modernity, agency, and power.

Current research on religion often follows the practice-based approach to moral subjectivity explicated above. For example, Mahmood (2005) challenges standard feminist critiques of Islam by examining pedagogical instruction and the disciplining of the exterior body as a means of cultivating an interior morality in which women found empowerment in piety. Mahmood (2005, 138) employs a Foucauldian framework on which to investigate an earlier conceptualization of habitus developed by Aristotle that emphasizes the process by which habitus is learned. She achieves this by studying embodied rituals that are enacted through and productive of sentiments and volitions in

the formation of the pious subject, which is linked to action. Similarly, in her language socialization study of young Hasidic women, Ayala Fader (2011, 326) uses Foucault's notion of technologies of the self, or "the operations one performs on oneself in order to become an ethical subject," as a way to engage with the study of language and embodiment in religious socialization. Fader (2011, 333) found that "rote habituation of the body to certain religious practices and aesthetics" and praising routines (as opposed to explicit teachings) provoked the gendered feelings and desires of a Hasidic female subject.

Other anthropologists have studied explicit instruction as well as techniques of instruction, such as narrative, rote repetition, and shaming. Recent scholarship in the study of moral-subject formation has focused on the mechanisms by which moral values become moral action. These mechanisms include rote habituation of the body and language (Urciuoli 2008, 2012). In my research, I am attentive to multiple technologies of the self across various contexts and practices. I take advantage of approaches from the linguistic anthropology of religion, drawing on scholarship that focuses on language practices during religious rituals and religious socialization. Linguistic anthropological approaches to religion have examined ritual speech, spirit possession, orality, textuality, and religious socialization, all of which work to establish and maintain ideas about agency, identity, and morality (Hanks 1996; Prasad 2006). Language socialization research can show how moral subjectivity transforms the individual and is consciously transformed by the individual. In this way, it contributes to the study of social reproduction as well as to the study of processes of social change (Fader 2011).

The study of religious practices has also been central to the study of language as action, in particular, performativity. In the Butlerian view, performativity is the source of subjectivity. The notion of performativity enables anthropologists to study the ways that social categories of identity are constructed in the act of doing or saying. In the linguistic anthropology of religion, two types of performative acts have been taken to be especially salient sites of moral subjectivity: ritual and narrative. Scholars have explored the performance of religious language (Corwin 2014; Robbins 2001), including the use of marked linguistic resources to communicate with an interlocutor who is not materially present (Keane 1997a). Anthropologists have given attention to religious language as a strategy to index moral subjectivity (Keane 2011, Hill 1995). For example, spirit possession, generally defined as when a spirit and a human being occupy the same body but speak in different voices (Keane 2004), can complicate notions of the speaker's identity, agency, and authority, and can bestow power on speakers who may otherwise have little. Linguistic anthropologists of religion have also paid attention to narratives as both referential and constitutive of moral subjectivity. Narrative performance is a fundamental way for humans to construct subjectivity, give meaning to experience, and propose a social and logical order for that meaning by linking events causally and emotionally (Capps and Ochs 1995, 13). Narratives reflect and shape the sociocultural frameworks in which they are situated. As in language socialization, speakers do not always reproduce a unified moral subjectivity through narrative. This means that discourses, narratives, and religious language that produce moral subjectivity can be contradictory or inconsistent.

In my research, treating missionization as an encounter leads me to foreground discursive practices. I focus on the performance of religious language because, although American and Dominican participants in the STM encounter may not share a language, they often share key aspects of their linguistic ideologies, particularly regarding religious language (Bialecki and del Pinal 2011). The performance of religious language in the context of rituals as well as in everyday interactions during the STM encounter instantiates social hierarchies by establishing roles through which subjectivities emerge, e.g., blessed or agent for God. Religious discourses and religious language are also used as tools to negotiate the inherent inequalities in STM relations.

Ultimately, my theoretical approach to faith and giving builds on and finds common ground among linguistic and sociocultural anthropological studies of economics, morality, and religion. Bringing my areas of inquiry together in order to analyze moral-subject formation enables me to articulate my participants' experiences of personal transformation during cross-cultural encounters and religious giving. In so doing, I aim to describe evangelical philanthropic behavior and other economic relations. As Bauman (1983, 25) asserts, religious practices serve as a key frame of reference, "a metaphorical model that organize[s] and serve[s] as standard for both interpretation of history and direction of human action." By studying how American and Dominican STM actors make sense of their own moral subjectivity and navigate their relationships during religious giving, I illuminate the ways that participation in STM philanthropy shapes their understandings of their agency and of global social conditions such as economic and

racial inequality. These understandings inform their behaviors in ways that have material implications.

Chapter Summaries

In the next chapter, Chapter 2, I examine STMs in further detail, including the history of STMs and their entanglement with other postcolonial projects. As the popularity of STMs grew, so did research on them and criticisms of them in popular media. Most of these criticisms argue that STMs are ultimately self-serving and do more harm than good. Equipped with a growing awareness of these criticisms, STM participants have made various efforts to rebrand themselves in ways that acknowledge their unearned power and to emphasize the multi-directionality of their encounters and exchanges. In the second part of this chapter, I describe my field sites and methodological choices, highlighting my multi-sited encounter approach. Although I offer some Dominican perspectives and experiences of STMs, this dissertation focuses on American STM participants, reflecting the structure of the encounter itself and re-directing the tourist's gaze in an effort to denaturalize and denormalize American culture and institutions, especially those that are presupposed to be, or are labeled as, moral.

In Chapter 3, I position STMs as religious tourism in which volunteer-tourists seek meaning, authenticity, and spiritual growth by encountering other cultures, experiences, and worldviews. I demonstrate how STMs socialize moral ideas about culture, poverty, economic inequality, and globalization through religious discourses and cross-cultural interactions. I focus my attention in this chapter on the construction of poverty, which is treated in contradictory and inconsistent fashion as simultaneously vice

and virtue. I examine how religious and economic discourses assign a moral subjectivity to class status and cultural behaviors. STM practices encompass multiple technologies of the self, such as interactions and affected habituation of the body through which American volunteers observe and attempt temporarily to emulate an imagined poverty. These practices redefine participants' personal sense of identity and agency as they seek to understand difference in unfamiliar cultural contexts. Because STMs ultimately cater to the American experience, they decontextualize Dominican poverty from wider global processes in which Americans are complicit and/or from which they benefit; this ultimately has material effects on American volunteering and giving practices.

The fourth chapter builds on my arguments in Chapter 3, examining the moralizing discourses of poverty expressed during STM encounters as racialized. Although racial differences are rarely explicitly acknowledged or discussed on STMs, race is commodified and exoticized through tropes that are shaped by a white-savior narrative. Despite ostensible intent to promote racial harmony or equality, STM encounters rely on paradoxical notions of a colorblind anti-racism that is mostly left unexamined by participants. In particular, race and racism are frequently erased; this leaves Americans' existing racial paradigms unchallenged or even reified, which later plays out in their home country as well.

In the fifth chapter, I address how American participants make sense of their experiences on STMs, such as their observations of poverty and racial discrimination that I describe in Chapters 3 and 4. That is, how do volunteers understand and reconcile the existence of poverty and discrimination with their belief in an omnipotent and benevolent

God? This classic dilemma, known as the problem of evil, can serve as a critical moment of disjuncture in which this exposure to vast inequalities leads American evangelicals to question their religious beliefs and worldviews. In order to evade this crisis of faith, participants subscribe to two related ideologies that construct global socioeconomic issues as personal religious revelations. These ideologies provide models for moral subjectivity and agency that serve as a mode of subjectivation, "that is, the way people are 'incited or invited' to realize their moral obligations" (Foucault 1997, 264). I examine how these ideologies are expressed through two discursive practices, calling narratives and religious language, which construct participants as moral subjects and can reveal the ways that Christians come to understand the causes of, and solutions to, inequality.

Chapter 6 examines how Americans' ontological orientation to evil in the world fails to connect their own lives to the poverty that they witness. STM moral discourses, which reflect late-capitalist tendencies to emphasize individual contributions to charity, further obscures the root causes of inequality. Together, this orientation and STM discourses structure participants' understanding of poverty and shape their giving practices in ways that limit their attention to making needed structural-level changes to systems that create and reproduce inequality. As a result, American volunteers engage in misguided actions that fail to help and may even cause harm to Dominican communities.

Chapter 7 demonstrates how charitable gifts work to uphold and reinforce postcolonial inequalities created by the late-capitalist global trade in commodities. I examine Americans' ideologies of gift-giving, including reciprocity, in order to understand how participants attempt to negotiate their unequal power relations. Drawing

from theories of exchange expressed by Mauss and Marx, such as commodity fetishism, reciprocity and (in)alienability, I examine the intricate relationship between trade in commodities and charitable gift giving. Involving various forms of misrecognition, the STM system of charitable giving does not just fail to address the root causes of inequality; it also helps to perpetuate them.

Finally, in my conclusion, I examine the increasing connections drawn by American participants between recent movements for social justice in the US with the poverty and inequality that they witness abroad. Although moral discourses legitimize STM practices, thus obscuring how STMs cause harm and uphold a system of oppression, other religious values, such as fellowship, freedom, and justice, provide alternative perspectives to STMs relations that have the potential to shape more radical forms of solidarity and class consciousness between Americans and Dominicans.

As an unprecedented number of Americans travel abroad as volunteer-tourists, the relationships that are formed across linguistic and cultural divides, as well as across unequal economic positions, can reveal much about contemporary global relations, as well as evangelical understandings of agency, power, and subjectivity. Ultimately, this dissertation is a meditation on connections, and also on mis- and disconnections. Contemporary life is complex and characterized by contradictions and paradoxes, such as increasing global connections yet intensifying feelings of isolation, and historic rates of voluntarism and philanthropy yet ever-deepening wealth inequality. In my research, I observed the ways in which people encounter difference and yet, despite those differences, decide to seek out similarity and unity. I followed people who chose to leave

their homes and travel to a new country to meet face to face and create a community with others, but who sometimes fail to see the ways in which their lives are already densely entangled. I examine the ways in which people want to recognize and amend injustices, and I also examine the current limitations to that recognition, which explain why people feel compelled to give in the ways that they do. I follow people who are trying to do what is the most natural of human social acts—to understand the world around them and to figure out how best to live with other people.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGIES AND BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH

> "We're not like other groups."
> "We're probably very different from any other team you've seen before."

During my 13 months of research in the Dominican Republic, I closely observed the activities of 20 different short-term-mission (STM) teams and was in communication or interacted with many more, in person or on social media. As I began my research with each incoming team, members, often very aware of the popular criticisms of their work, would make statements like the ones above to defend their actions as short-term missionaries in the Dominican Republic. I would later realize that these declarations were made to justify their trips to me as a researcher of STMs, and also to assure themselves that their mission work was truly beneficial to the local communities.

Over the years in which I conducted this research, 2013–2018, the groups that I observed increasingly felt pressure to respond to criticisms of volunteer tourism and attempted to differentiate themselves from a typical STM, which as a practice had come under heightened scrutiny in the mainstream media and also among Christian writers and leaders. The website for *Christianity Today*, "evangelicalism's flagship magazine," founded by famed American evangelist Billy Graham, summarizes some of the key points of debate:

> A longtime staple of church youth groups…trips lasting a few days to a few weeks give lay Christians a taste of the life of a missionary, without needing as much financial support or the blessing of a sending denomination. More recently, missiologists, pastors, and career missionaries have criticized STMs for blinding churches to the needs in their local community, their financial burden, and their reported

> ineffectiveness at creating lasting change abroad. Others defend STMs for encouraging young Christians' faith and putting them in touch with fellow believers worldwide.

Criticisms of STMs are widely discussed among academics as well as in popular media and typically dominate the conversation on STMs. However, often the loudest critics of STMs are expressed by religious leaders and STM-goers themselves, especially those of whom have undertaken multiple mission trips These criticisms have recently started to shape the ways in which American participants conduct STMs. Thus, it seems appropriate to start an overview of STMs with a brief overview of these criticisms.

Since emerging on the church scene in the 1950s, STMs have become a *de facto* religious rite of passage among practicing American Christians, especially youths as they come of age. According to the 2005 National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR), 41% of US teenagers (ages 13–17) have participated in a domestic or international religious service project (Trinitapoli and Vaisey 2009, 8). Additionally, almost a third of Christian congregations in the United States sponsor international STMs annually (Wuthnow 2009). Volunteer-tourism, both secular and faith-based, has ballooned into a billion-dollar industry (Lupton 2011); part of what writer Teju Cole (2012) refers to as "the White Savior Industrial Complex." Due in part to their rapid growth in popularity and widespread presence on social media, STMs and other forms of volunteer tourism have been the subject of a recent wave of criticism not unlike other critiques of postcolonial development. The death in January 2019 of missionary adventurer John Allen Chau, who illegally attempted to contact and proselytize the isolated Sentinelese tribe on North Sentinel Island in the Bay of Bengal, brought widespread negative attention to mission

work, including STMs, of which Chau had organized and led many throughout the world. Chau's death sparked debate among the missionaries and STM participants with whom I worked. Many praised him as a martyr who had sought to fulfill the decree to bring Christ and the Bible to all of humanity. Others in popular media, however, maintained that, in saving the souls of the Sentinelese, Chau very likely could have infected and wiped out the tribe. Outside of the Christian community, Chau's actions were condemned as neocolonial hubris. Chau's tragically failed attempt to contact the Sentinelese, although more extreme, is illustrative of many of the underlying criticisms of short-term missions: that, ultimately, mission trips are more beneficial to volunteers than to the communities they aim to help, and that local communities can inadvertently be harmed by volunteers intending to help.

A common criticism of STMs is that, behind the mask of altruism, volunteer trips are self-serving for Western participants. In "Barbie Savior" (barbiesavior), a popular Instagram account, two anonymous former missionaries lampoon volunteer tourism, particularly its representation on social media. Barbie Savior's "bio" reads "Jesus. Adventures. Africa. Two worlds. One love. Babies. Beauty. Not qualified. Called. 20 years young. It's not about me…but it kind of is." In one pithy description, the creators behind this scathing parody account portray what they consider to be the underlying hubris, privilege, and naivety of volunteer-tourists, who in many cases are still students and lack the necessary experience to try to teach, let alone "save" other people. Social media accounts like Barbie Savior and the activist account No White Saviors that are run by former volunteer-tourists, argue that volunteer tourism is patronizing to local

communities. Similar criticisms have been published through more formal channels, such as *New York Times* columnist Frank Bruni's essay, "To Get to Harvard, Go to Haiti?" In it, Bruni calls out volunteer tourism as "drive-by charity work," adding that, although many volunteers are "well-intentioned, some seem not to notice poverty until an exotic trip comes with it." Bruni similarly calls attention to the class bias involved, noting that one must have a relatively affluent background in order to afford to travel internationally to perform volunteer work. Bruni argues that young people and their parents show little interest in the cause itself and instead are gaming the college-admissions process. According to Bruni, "It turns developing-world hardship into a prose-ready opportunity for growth, empathy into an extracurricular activity." Rather than a quest for social justice, more often participation in STMs is a social commodity that serves to benefit the relative elite.

Apart from criticizing the volunteers' lack of credentials and questionable motivations, other critics point out that local charities and causes are being overlooked for more exotic volunteer opportunities abroad. Domestic STMs usually take place in impoverished rural or inner-urban areas or in cities recently affected by disasters, such as New Orleans in the decade after Hurricane Katrina and, more recently, Houston, which received numerous volunteer groups following Hurricane Harvey in 2017. Unlike international STMs, which Wuthnow (2009, 180) estimates costs an average of $1,000 per person, domestic STMs cost relatively little because the organizers can partner with local churches within their network rather than hiring an STM-overseeing organization to act as a cultural broker, and they do not have to pay for international airfare. Although

this frees up money that could be invested in the target community, this does not typically happen. For the STM groups with which I worked, the amount invested in the mission project itself, such as construction costs to build a house, was generally consistent across domestic and international STMs. This suggests that participants are more inclined to pay more money in order to participate in an international STM than to participate in a domestic STM and to invest the money thereby saved in the target community. What is more, the funds contributed per participant to the mission project itself were often the smallest portion of STM costs, following airfare, lodging, food, and even in-country transportation. Probasco (2013) found that participation in a domestic STM influenced giving behaviors differently than participation in an international STM:

> Participation in a domestic trip is associated with significantly higher rates of volunteering in one's local community and for internationally focused organizations; it is also associated with significantly lower rates of giving to secular organizations. In contrast, high school participation in an international mission trip has no significant association with adult volunteering or giving when other factors, like recent participation in an international mission trip, are taken into account. (Probasco 2013, 219)

Significantly, although STM proponents argue that STMs will influence future giving and volunteering, this is not true, according to Wuthnow's (2009) comprehensive study.

The desire to travel abroad to do charity work has also been criticized as ethnocentric. For instance, medical STMs bring doctors or dentists to areas around the globe where people do not have affordable access to medical treatment; in many cases, though, these medical professionals invite other participants, who have little or no medical training, to take part in procedures in ways that would be illegal in the US. Missionary Jason explained to me, "If you took a high-school biology class in the US,

that would make you as qualified here as some of the [Dominican] nurses or doctors." Jason's comment indicates a lax approach to medical care based in ethnocentric views of local culture; this lax approach, in turn, may attract young people who are interested in gaining hands-on medical experience from which they would be excluded back home. For instance, Liz, who is now a physical therapist, tells how she was led to her vocation, in part, by participating in an STM in Guatemala when she was a high-school student. According to Liz, a dentist on her mission team invited her to pull out a patient's tooth. No mention was made of whether the patient was informed of, or consented to, the procedure's being performed by a teenager who lacked credentials and experience. Laughing, Liz recounted the thrill of the experience and how, afterward, she had someone take a picture of her, proudly holding up the tooth, with the patient, whom she described as "bawling in the background." Much to Bruni's point, Liz confirmed that she later wrote of this experience in her personal statement for applications to physical-therapy programs. For some international volunteer-tourism organizations, lack of credentials or qualifications does not matter, as long as the volunteer-tourist is willing to pay for the experience.

Similarly, some critics point out the perverse economics of volunteer tourism, in which relatively wealthy people pay money to import their own unskilled work to poor areas with high unemployment. For instance, a large number of volunteer-tourist groups perform construction work that could instead be hired out to unemployed local people, who could provide a higher quality of workmanship and do so at a fraction of the volunteers' overall cost. Ver Beek's (2006) study of volunteer tourism after Hurricane

Mitch found that Americans rebuilding homes in Honduras spent an average of $30,000 per house (including their own travel and housing costs), while the total for similar construction work conducted by local organizations was $2,000 per house. Volunteer groups spent 15 times more per house and did work that otherwise could have been done by local people, which would have provided employment and helped to stimulate the local economy. Factors such as these have left many critics questioning the real value of volunteer tourism for recipient communities, and have left some arguing that donating money in ways that enable local people to develop their own communities would have farther-reaching and longer-lasting effects.

Along these lines, volunteer tourism has been denounced as ineffective, and sometimes even as doing more harm than good to target communities. Just what "more harm than good" means varies between scholars and Christian leaders. As illustrated above, social scientists have criticized volunteers' lack of knowledge of local culture, disruption of local power structures, and undercutting of local businesses by providing their own imported goods and services. Some investigations take this a step further by demonstrating the ways that volunteers may only compound the problems that they are trying to address. For instance, writing on voluntarism and charity at orphanages in an Op/Ed for *The New York Times* Tina Rosenberg (2018) argues that "orphanages can be good business," showing how the numbers of children in orphanages in many Latin American and Asian countries have risen, not because of an increase in parentlessness, but because of the influx of foreign volunteers and donations that incentivize child abandonment. Rosenberg proposes that, rather than sending volunteers or money to

orphanages abroad, money should be given to organizations that could distribute it to poor families, thus enabling them to support their own children at home.

In contrast to these researchers' views, the phrase "more harm than good" is interpreted differently by Christian leaders and STM-goers. For STM proponents, "more harm than good" refers to creating what they describe as a system of dependency in which local people choose to rely so much on the goods and services donated by volunteer-tourists that they lose the desire to better their own situation through individual means, such as employment. This folk theory of dependency[2] was cited in the STM literature frequently recommended to me by American participants, which I will consider later in this chapter. Discourses of dependency were often reproduced by missionaries as well as by many of the STM and Dominican leaders. For example, Jason's goal is to empower Dominicans to be self-sufficient, ending what he calls a culture of dependency (a concept not unlike that of the "culture of poverty"). Like the STM participants who open this chapter, he would frequently describe how he was different from other missionaries, including those who started All Because of Christ (ABC) missions, where he was then the head missionary. According to Jason, "whenever a church or somebody needed money, [the founding missionaries] would just open up their wallets and say, 'Here you go.'" Jason was critical of his own volunteers, claiming that "they come and

[2] This popular discourse among volunteers and missionaries is different from the academic form of dependency theory, a theory of development that postulates that core (or developed) countries are dependent on the resources and labor that they pillage or exploit from the periphery (or undeveloped countries). As I will discuss in Chapter 3, volunteers often subscribe to modernization theory, to which dependency theory is a direct response; it holds that underdeveloped countries have not developed due to their own failings, such as adherence to "backward" traditions.

have a big heart, but they don't think it through and that's when helping hurts because it has created a system of dependency." This notion of dependency is one that I will return to in greater detail in later chapters; for present purposes, it is important to note that it ignores the overall economics of STM-receiving countries as well as the economic relations between STM-sending and STM-receiving countries.

In response to these criticisms, STM participants have tried to distance themselves from common perceptions of volunteer tourism by making statements such as the ones that open this chapter. Many STM organizers try to avoid the more paternalistic frameworks of STMs by rebranding them as "service learning" or "partnerships." "Mission trip" is often the preferred colloquial term, used by less seasoned participants and organizations; it implies that short-term-mission work is a form of tourism, an image that many more experienced and socially aware STM participants hope to shed. The term "mission trip" also postulates that the goal of the trip is a mission, or to save others through evangelization. In referring to STMs instead as service learning or partnerships, participants discard the paternalistic notion that they are the sole bearers of knowledge on everything from religion to local culture. The concept of service learning is in line with what McGehee (2014) terms "transformative tourism," whereby volunteers gain a better understanding of local people's lives and the local culture and economy while also participating in charity. In framing it as "service learning," organizers acknowledge the self-serving aspects of volunteer tourism. The name reflects an effort to recognize the ways that the exchange of knowledge has always flowed in both directions between Americans and local populations. Taking this a step further, "partnership" implies

egalitarian relations and shared religious identity and commitment to the mission. However, the partnership remains unequal because it relies on American patronage that typically gives Americans greater influence over the mission than local people. As Adler and Offut (2017, 607) found, ideologies of equality are contradicted in partnership discourse because "leaders of STM trips and foreign host communities worry about the moral hazard of creating a dependency that would impair the spiritual or material freedom of either side."

For most of the STM organizations that I observed, rebranding efforts take place in name only, with those self-described as partnerships and service learning effectively taking the same form in implementation as groups who referred to their STM as a mission trip. However, some organizations with which I worked have attempted to make STMs more explicitly bi-directional by creating platforms for Dominicans to share with volunteers and to teach them about their culture. For instance, Dominicans and volunteers take turns leading worship ceremonies or sharing their testimonies of faith. Proponents of the service-learning framework, such as Jason at ABC, contend that, regardless of the effect they may have while on an STM, volunteers will help local communities in other ways when they return home, such as financial support of long-term missionization or child sponsorship. This perspective still portrays volunteers as saviors. Although there is some evidence that STMs influence participants' religious beliefs and practices (Beyerlein, Adler, and Trinitapoli 2011; Trinitapoli and Vaisey 2009), researchers who study the long-term impacts of service learning on local communities or on participants' future volunteer work and giving behaviors debate their efficacy (Adler and Offutt 2018;

Priest et al. 2006; Ver Beek 2006; Wuthnow 2009). For instance, Beyerlein, Adler, and Trinitapoli (2011, 785) found that participation in an STM was "a robust predictor of all four different forms of youth civic action—political participation, donating to causes, informal volunteering, and formal volunteering." However, Ver Beek (2009) indicates that, without further encouragement and facilitation by religious organizations, participants' volunteering and giving behaviors would likely fade to pre-STM levels.

As I will examine throughout this dissertation, these rebranding measures have had, for the most part, little effect on the overall imbalance of power in STMs. Despite their claims of uniqueness, the STM groups that I observed, in terms of their basic structures or effects, were not radically different from one another; nor, presumably, were they much different from the many other international STMs in which an estimated 1.6–4 million[3] people participate every year (Wuthnow 2009). However, one group, the Hope team, had established a permanent medical clinic, run by a Dominican doctor and nurse, to treat patients with donated medicine throughout the year. Similarly, in addition to their annual medical mission, one medical group started a locally run foundation that focused on preventative health education.[4] Apart from medical teams, I observed some STMs are moving toward creating opportunities for Dominicans and Haitian-Dominicans to provide for their own subsistence, such as by building community vegetable gardens or setting up

[3] Although this is the most widely cited number, it is also generally agreed to be an underestimate, as it does not include adults who do not regularly attend church services or minors, who are thought to be the largest demographic of STM-goers (Priest et al. 2006; Probasco 2013).

[4] This mostly involved demonstrations on how to make dietary changes in order to prevent diabetes and hypertension, which, respectively, affect roughly 10% and 20% of the population in the Dominican Republic (WHO 2016; WHO 2018).

microlending operations. Other groups began college-scholarship programs. Near the end of my research, I also made the acquaintance of Brandon, an STM organizer who was conducting a site visit with a mission organization. Formerly a long-term missionary in Honduras, Brandon advocated for what he called more "radical" approaches to STMs, focusing on activism, a matter that I will discuss further in my concluding chapter.

Brief History of STMs

STMs are relative newcomers in the history of Christian missionization. Many Christians today consider Christ to be the first Christian missionary and take as a commandment his words in Mark 16:15, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation," and in Matthew 28:19, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations." These two verses are frequently brought up by STM participants, in their journals, on social media, during worship sessions, and on their mission t-shirts. They find inspiration in the Apostle Paul, who famously took up Christ's decrees in letters and other writings that documented his travels throughout the Middle East and Europe, spreading the religion during the first century of the Christian era.

Christian missions have persisted since the founding of the religion, reaching the farthest corners of the globe, and, as I outlined in Chapter 1, playing an important part in colonialism. The Dominican Republic and other popular STM destinations have a history of colonial missionary presence, particularly Spanish and French. Anthropologists recognize the entanglement of historical religious missionization with wider sociocultural transformations and political projects implemented by the colonial nation-state. Similarly, Beidelman (1982, 29) compares the dual role of colonial mission institutions with

development organizations around the world today. As colonial-era missions were entangled with colonialism, present-day STMs are entangled with postcolonial development. Short-term missionization first arose and gained some prominence after World War II and through the early 1960s, a period characterized by decolonization around the world and investment by the US government in global development, modernization, and international exchange programs such as the Marshall Plan, the Fulbright program, and the Peace Corps. The last two, like STMs, persist today and attract mostly young people. In the aftermath of World War II, there was heightened global awareness, independence movements among colonies, and the need to reconstruct various parts of the world that had been destroyed by the war. Despite a surge in interest and funding to meet those needs, traditional missions, which at that time were considered a lifetime commitment, faced an unexpected and significant decline in recruitment. Two organizations, Operation Mobilization (OM), led by founder George Verver, and Youth with a Mission (YWAM), led by Loren Cunningham, started a movement to introduce term limits on mission work and to provide opportunities for lay people without extensive theological, cultural, or linguistic training to enter the mission field. These early short-term missions were typically a year to two years in length, much like those expected of young men in the Mormon faith today. This relatively short period of time was the defining feature of these early STMs, distinguishing them from the lifelong vocations that traditional missions were expected to be. As Howell (2006) describes in an article written for *Christianity Today*, “This innovation was more about adapting to a life stage rather than any explicitly redefining ‘mission.’ However, the notion of spending a specific term

‘in the field’ stuck in the mission community.” Early STMs were seen as complementary to long-term missions in that they provided temporary workers to rejuvenate and supplement the mission field with inspired attitudes and new skills.

According to Howell (2006), the growth of STMs as volunteer tourism was made possible by mass commercial air travel, increased paid vacation time, and the growth of tourism in the Caribbean and Mexico. These developments largely occurred in the 1970s, during which time STMs were hailed as an alleviator of poverty by modernization theorists (Stronza 2001). STMs began to attract young adults due to the increasing popularity of spring break as a travel opportunity for college students (Howell 2012, 74). It was not until the 1980s, when STMs were marketed by organizers specifically to high-school-age and college-age youths, that STMs were reconceptualized and became as they are today, oriented primarily toward young laypeople (Howell 2012, 41). These STMs emphasized the personal transformation and spiritual growth of the tripgoers themselves as they participated in proselytization and acts of service. Evangelical churches invested in developing and promoting STMs in an effort to curtail declining church attendance numbers in what both religious officials and researchers have called a period of secularization. This secularization is characterized by an absence of members of the younger generations, whose church attendance declined as their college matriculation increased. Congregations around the world began to recognize the need for changes to the church to appeal to youths (Howell 2012). These changes included development of youth programming, incorporation of contemporary music into worship services, and STMs. STMs accomplished two goals: to “add to the Kingdom,” or increase the number of

Christians around the world, especially in places where Christians are a minority; and, in so doing, to retain the existing membership of Christians in churches in predominantly Christian nations. STMs became tools for socialization and for (re)affirming commitment to evangelical values. STMs have thus become established as an important component of American Christian moral-subject formation.

Today, STMs vary widely, from for-profit endeavors to church-led retreats to family vacations to internships for missionaries in training for longer-term missions. Contemporary STMs typically focus on proselytization and humanitarian relief. Some STM organizations attempt to strike a balance between the two; others focus almost exclusively on one or the other.[5] By definition, and as originally conceived in the post-World War II period, STMs may be up to a year in length; but today, the average STM is much shorter, just eight days long (Wuthnow 2009), and over 83% of them are less than two weeks (Wuthnow 2009). The average length of the STMs that I observed was eight days. Proponents of STMs suggest that, despite this short length, STMs have a lasting impact on volunteers. In my research, I found that many young people decide, after an STM, to enroll in Bible colleges and devote their lives to a Christian vocation, including long-term mission work. However, this is more a matter of correlation than of causation, as many young people who participate in STMs are already considering such paths, and their STM experiences may confirm their pre-existing beliefs and inclinations. My findings are similar to those yielded by more quantitative studies on STMs and mission

[5] There are STMs that focus on humanitarian causes that are different from secular volunteer tourism in that the American participants are members of a Christian group, and even if their primary goal is not to evangelize, evangelization is still welcomed as an incidental outcome.

agencies. Many of the participants in my study have gone on to become repeat STM tripgoers or financial supporters. Additionally, individuals and churches that had participated in an STM were more likely than non-participants to support long-term missions at the mission site. Beyond these more measurable outcomes, participants reported long-lasting changes in perceptions and attitudes that inform their actions in other areas of their lives, such as charitable giving.

It is difficult to track statistical data on American participation in international STMs. This is because the movement is widely diffused among thousands of mission-sending organizations in the US[6] as well as an unknown number of independently sponsored trips led by churches, schools, and other groups. The most cited and most recent data come from Princeton sociologist of religion Robert Wuthnow's 2009 study, which estimated that Americans spent 2.7 billion dollars on STMs. A 2008 Barna Group study estimates that roughly two-thirds of STMs are international. Many of the participants in international STMs are repeat attendees, traveling either to the same destination each time, in order to maximize developing relations and outreach within the same community, or to a different mission or country entirely, in order to gain greater exposure to various cultures and lives around the world. Roughly 24% of all American evangelicals (who as a religious group make up 23.6% of the total US population) have participated in short-term religious service projects (Smith and Snell 2009). These studies only include data on evangelicals and notably do not include data on members of other Protestant denominations (Conservative and Mainline) or of the Church of Jesus Christ of

[6] 3,700 in 2003 according to a study published in the same year by Peterson, Aeschliman, and Sneed.

Latter-day Saints, which, along with evangelicals, is the religious group whose members are most likely to participate in STMs (Trinitapoli and Vaisey 2009). The groups studied in this dissertation were limited to those that participate in the STMs organized by the two STM-overseeing organizations that I researched, which represent Protestant groups, including evangelical, Presbyterian, Southern Baptist, and non-denominational.

As I discussed in Chapter 1, STMs are conceived of as attracting young people, including high-school and college-age students. Studies have consistently found higher STM participation among teenagers and young adults than older adults (Priest et al. 2006; Wuthnow 2009). However, I encountered many groups that were made up entirely of adults or were mixed (beyond the addition of parental chaperones or youth ministers); this is especially likely to be the case with medical missions, where many team members have medical training. Likewise, Dominican's participation in STMs skews toward children and youths, apart from medical missions, which are mostly attended by adult patients. The missions that I observed whose primary explicit focus was proselytization were mostly comprised of adults. Regardless of age, mission participants travel in what are referred to as teams or groups, with a team or group leader, often a pastor or youth pastor. These teams mostly consist of people who attend the same church or school, but may also include family members, friends, or co-workers. Similar to most other findings on STM participation, most of the American participants whom I observed were native-born white Americans. However, Adler and Ruiz (2018, 324) found that 30% of STMs are put in motion by immigrants in American congregations, for whom they serve as a form of civic remittance and extend pre-existing transnational ties.

As noted in the criticisms that were considered earlier, there is a decided class bias to STM participation due to the costs involved. The groups that I followed were charged $40–70 per person per day for room, board, and incidental costs, excluding airfare and additional costs such as tourist excursions and airport transportation. These numbers also do not include whatever costs the teams hope to cover for their mission project, such as the costs of construction supplies or medicine; the money needed for these expenses is often raised through fundraising events prior to departure. Groups typically bring an additional $500–$1,500 to spend on their mission project. In line with the findings of Howell (2012) and Wuthnow (2009), teams' supporting congregations often subsidize the costs of the project itself, while personal costs are usually covered by individuals, through personal or family funds or fundraising activities. Wuthnow (2009) found that college students or those with a college education are more than twice as likely to participate in an STM than those who have not attained that level of education. Snee (2013) suggests that higher education correlates with STM participation because it indicates a tendency to be more globally inclined. This correlation could also reflect the class bias of STM participation, in that those who can afford higher education are also likely to be able to afford to participate in STMs. Whatever the case, such tendencies seem to run counter to the previously mentioned correlation between higher education and decline in religious practice.

Americans' choices of destination for their international STMs seem to depend mostly on geographic proximity to the US. The most popular sites are located in Central America and the Caribbean, including the Bahamas (which receives one STM participant

for every 15 residents). Particularly popular destinations include Mexico, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, the site of this dissertation study as well as Howell's (2012) ethnography. As I will discuss in Chapter 4, Africa (which is typically conceived by participants as monolithic rather than a continent consisting of diverse nation-states, geographies, and cultures) was considered by my study participants as the model against which to compare all other mission sites. Over 84% of STM teams go to locations where the Christian church is already established (Priest and Priest 2008; Priest, Wilson, and Johnson 2010), likely because of existing ties with churches in those countries. STMs are short in duration and many participants go during holiday periods or use their personal vacation time, so the closeness of Mexico and the Caribbean make them accessible, in both financial and practical terms. (Puerto Rico offers an additional advantage to American volunteers who do not have passports.) Another important consideration is that, with few exceptions, the primary language of these destinations is either English or Spanish (many volunteers, especially younger ones, have taken introductory-level courses in Spanish). A final consideration is that these places are popular tourist destinations that offer tropical excursions and other activities for participants to enjoy.

Research on STMs

The bulk of the literature on STMs has been published by long-term missionaries, STM leaders, and other officials from Christian organizations. In this dissertation I will frequently reference two such texts on missions and other faith-based acts of charity authored by Christians who engage and such practices; these books were consistently

recommended to me by missionaries who have used them to inform their own approaches to STMs: *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor…and Yourself* by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert (2009) and *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help, and How to Reverse It* by Robert D. Lupton (2011). These books have made it to mainstream discussion on missions and charity, such as the former's feature on an episode of *Freakonomics Radio*. These books do not exclusively describe international STMs, but they explore the toxic effects of the Christian church's mission to help the poor—which, they argue, creates harmful cycles of dependency on charity that, in turn, reinforce paternalism among those who give while also cultivating a sense of inferiority among the poor. Both books offer strategies for alleviating poverty without creating dependency, such as Lupton's "Oath for Compassionate Service":

> 1) never do for the poor what they have (or could have) the capacity to do for themselves, 2) limit one-way giving to emergency situations, 3) strive to empower the poor through employment, lending, and investing, 4) subordinate self-interests to the needs of those being served, and 5) above all do no harm. (2011, 128-131).

Many of the groups with which I worked tried to incorporate these suggestions, resulting in a sense of exceptionalism and deservingness to participate in an STM.

Jason loaned me a copy of *Toxic Charity*. He explained how he had once requested that the members of his mission's board, who were worried that the book's proposals represented a paradigm shift in missionization, read it before their annual meeting. For Jason, one of the key lessons from the book is "Give once and you elicit appreciation; give twice and you create anticipation; give three times and you create expectation; give four times and it becomes entitlement; give five times and you establish

dependency" (Lupton 2011, 130). Jason frequently quoted this passage or parts of it to me throughout my research, and he had typed it up and taped it to the book's front cover.

In contrast to the substantial number of works that have been published by popular and religious presses, little scholarly work on STMs exists. The majority of it has been written by faculty at Christian colleges, including Robert Priest, Kurt Ver Beek, and the aforementioned Howell, who has written extensively on STMs for *Christianity Today*. These scholars have written both religious and secular publications on STMs, often writing on the effectiveness of STMs, such as whether they accomplish their religious or humanitarian objectives (Offutt 2011, 797). Many of these works also give advice on improving STM effectiveness, in terms of achieving objectives and improving relations with local communities.

Howell is also the author of *Short-Term Mission: An Ethnography of Christian Travel and Narrative Experience*, one of the only monograph-length ethnographies published on STMs. Howell's ethnography focuses on STM narratives produced by American participants, and their implications for broader understandings of missions and poverty in the Christian church. I will forego an in-depth summary of Howell's ethnography here, because I make reference to it throughout this dissertation. There are some important differences between Howell's research and mine. Although his research, like mine, takes place in the Dominican Republic, his is limited to the pre-departure and mission activities of just one STM, and he considers only the perspectives of the American participants. My research focuses on multiple missions and follows them

longitudinally; and, although it focuses on American perspectives, it also takes Dominican perspectives into account.

Many scholars have concluded that STM projects have little lasting impact on local economies; yet at the same time other research has found that frequent participation in STMs across the life course can reproduce religious, social, and economic values and can impact participants' religious beliefs and economic practices. However, thus far, studies of STMs that consider the transformative aspects of STMs have focused almost exclusively on Americans' viewpoints (Howell 2012), with very little research examining whether and how STMs impact local participants' behaviors and beliefs (Zehner 2006). These studies demonstrate how STM encounters, like similar forms of postcolonial encounters such as development or tourism, transform American participants' lives and worldviews. Yet, the influence of STMs is potentially greater for the residents of some mission sites, where communities participate in multiple STMs per month. In contrast, Americans typically participate in an STM once or twice per year, making their annual exposure to STMs shorter overall than local participants. However, the trip represents a radical departure of everyday life, has a potentially greater impact in transforming worldviews. Studies vary on just how long-lasting that impact is on American participants. American participants in STMs consider them to be distinctly religious experiences and a church-related activity, whereas, for members of recipient communities, STMs are socially embedded in everyday life, reaching beyond formal religious practices to homes, schools, and communities. Findings from previous research on the impact of STMs on local communities are mixed. For instance, Ver Beek (2006)

found that members of communities who received homes after Hurricane Mitch reported that the presence of STMs did not change their satisfaction with their new house, motivation for civic participation, or spiritual or psychological needs. Birth (2006) found that the only significant change was in local people's perceptions of white Americans; rather than viewing them solely as oppressors, they came to know them as volunteers who were willing to do manual labor, the work of the oppressed.

Anthropologists researching short-term missions have incorporated many of the contributions from the study of traditional missionization that I described in Chapter 1, such as 1) focusing on the reproduction of missionization as it is entangled with broader postcolonial ideologies; 2) accounting for the relationship between sending and receiving countries; 3) studying missionization as a multidirectional transformative process; and, relatedly, 4) considering the role of the missionary in the missionization process. Building on these orientations, the study of STM encounters provides new insights into reproduction and transformation during missionization. For example, Howell and Dorr (2007), in their ethnographic study of American Christian college students, found that students viewed their participation in an STM as a form of pilgrimage. Rather than reproducing modernity to transform others, short-term missionizers move away from the modern world in order to be transformed by the missionized's production of authentic culture. Similarly, Occhipinti (2009) examines STMs as sites of youth socialization, arguing that STMs are coming-of-age rituals that play an important role in the construction of religious identity and the reproduction of religious practices, transforming young participants' faith. In line with other coming-of-age rituals, American STMs are

frequently passed down or initiated between parents and their children. By the end of the trip, while on what several of the missionaries in my research refer to as the "mission high," many American youths decide to commit to working with the church as either a missionary or pastor. Typically, this socio-religious impact of the trip declines in the months afterward (Ver Beek 2006), but many of the youths who participated in my research did follow through on such ambitions. Many of them went on to attend Bible colleges, and many others decided to be baptized shortly after, or even during, their participation in an STM encounter. Moreover, every long-term missionary and pastor under the age of 50 whom I met during my research claimed to have discovered their vocational calling while on an STM as a high-school or college student.

Background of Research

I began my preliminary fieldwork in the summer of 2013. Dressed much like a typical American STM participant, in shorts and a tank top and with the weight of my bulging backpack grinding into my shoulders, I made one of those desperate dashes that can only be made in an airport. This sprint took place in the Charlotte airport, where I was trying to trek across several terminals to reach my already-boarding connecting flight destined for vacation hot-spot Punta Cana, Dominican Republic. When I arrived at my departure terminal, which was home to flights departing for the Caribbean, I was struck by the abundance of people wearing brightly colored matching shirts. The first group that I passed, a group of eight or so gathered by a gate headed for Kingston, Jamaica, wore vibrant purple shirts that read "Mission Jamaica" with a Bible verse printed underneath—unfortunately, I was in too much of a rush to make a note of which verse. Seconds later, I

passed a group bound for San Juan, a dozen or so people wearing similar shirts, but in neon lime green with the words "Puerto Rico." By the time I finally arrived at my own gate, at the very end of the terminal, I had passed several more of these groups. Because my flight was almost finished boarding, I was unable to scope out any potential mission teams traveling with me (the group that I was to join was flying out of a different airport), but since the Dominican Republic is one of the most popular STM destinations, it was likely that there were other STM groups or individual participants already boarded. As I settled into my seat on the plane, my mind was abuzz with excitement. From US-based interviews and my literature-based research, I knew that STMs and other forms of service trips abroad had rapidly become prominent players in the tourism industry but seeing it firsthand throughout the terminal was a visual confirmation. Little did I know that I soon would be in possession of several of these mission shirts myself, presented to me by the groups with which I worked.

This dissertation is based on research with two STM-receiving organizations, All Because of Christ (ABC) and Dominican Republic Missions (DRM). In total, I conducted 13 months of research, starting with shorter stays of preliminary fieldwork, lasting about a month each, during the summers of 2013, 2015, and 2016, and then 10 consecutive months, July 2017 through May 2018. In all, I observed 20 STMs in their entirety, along with several other STMs that I observed partially (when overlaps between groups occurred). Through social media, which plays an important role in STMs, I continue to follow the participants as well as the churches and missions in both US and Dominican communities. I have also followed up with several of the US-based churches as they have

made plans for their next STMs, making this study a longitudinal as well as multi-sited ethnographic account of STMs.

Both ABC and DRM have their own networks of churches in a region where the major industries are sugar production and tourism, making this region representative of broader socioeconomic conditions in the country. Beyond their importance to the national economy as a whole, both industries are also very important to understanding the presence and form of short-term missionization in the Dominican Republic.

The town in which I was based is a company town of Azúcar Central, a major sugar supplier for a number of internationally marketed sugar brands. As one of the largest privately owned sugar producers in the Dominican Republic, Azúcar Central owns large expanses of land, including a small airport and a luxury resort where many mission teams stay. The company's sugar-cane plantations and refinery factory employ many of the province's residents. Many of these workers are undocumented Haitians or of Haitian descent, and because of their status face great difficulty finding other employment. Plantation workers with whom I spoke make an average of $2 per day, and factory workers make an average of $10 per day. These adverse social and economic conditions draw numerous STMs to the region, including those with which I worked. These STMs provide various forms of aid and social services to the sugar workers in the bateyes and barrios owned by Azúcar Central.

The sandy beaches and paradisiacal climate of the Dominican Republic attract over 5 million tourists to the country each year; over 20% of those tourists are from the US. Tourism began to take off in the country in the 1990s, first in Boca Chica, close to

the capital on the southern coast, and in Puerto Plata, on the northern coast. More recently, Punta Cana, in the east, was rapidly developed as a tourist destination; its beaches are ranked among the best in the world. The international airport in Punta Cana, built in the 1980s, has since grown to become the most transited airport in the Caribbean. Because of Punta Cana's rapid rise as a top tourist destination, its population increased rapidly. Many Dominicans and Haitian-Dominicans migrated to Punta Cana in the hope of landing jobs in the tourism sector, but there were more people than jobs available, and many of those who arrived ended up staying to work in the informal economy surrounding the tourism industry. The tourism boom in the Dominican Republic has also attracted more Haitian immigrants to cross the border to the Dominican side of the island, seeking work in both the formal and informal tourist economies. Tourism in the Dominican Republic has been widely written about; anthropologist Steven Gregory's ethnography *The Devil Behind the Mirror: Globalization and Politics in the Dominican Republic*, for example, examines the impacts of transnationalism and global tourism on Dominican lives.

STMs are part of the volunteer tourism industry and contribute to the tourism sector of the Dominican economy. There is the standard tourist-visa fee that must be paid upon entering the Dominican Republic, and STM participants may also pay for trips to the beach, other tourist excursions, and even stays in resort hotels. STM groups often stay at DRM-owned villas at the Azúcar Central-owned resort. Frequently, the people with whom STM teams work are employed at low wages by the very hotels in which the teams stay. One medical group with whom I worked stayed at a particular resort for years

before some of the workers asked the team if they too could receive medical services. Since then, the group held a medical clinic for the resort's employees on the last day of each mission.

STM-receiving organizations that send STMs to work with Haitian-Dominicans in the bateyes have a civil but tenuous relationship with Azúcar Central and other private owners of the bateyes. On one hand, the sugar companies benefit from the free healthcare and aid that STM groups supply. On the other hand, the sugar companies are aware that the STM teams disapprove of how they treat workers. Mission-receiving organizations typically do not speak out against labor abuses because, if they were to publicly criticize the companies, their access to batey workers would be limited or eliminated altogether.

Christianity is widely practiced throughout the Dominican Republic. In the past five decades, non-Catholic Christian denominations have spread rapidly across Latin America. The Dominican Republic is predominantly Roman Catholic. According to official statistics, 78% of the population is baptized Catholic, yet many are not practicing or attend a non-Catholic denominational church. Meanwhile, 18% of the Dominican population identify as "Christian," which colloquially refers to a non-Catholic, typically Protestant denomination. Among Haitian-Dominicans, whose incorporation into Dominican society has been encumbered by a long history of violence and discrimination, an estimated 33%, a percentage almost twice that of the Dominican population as a whole, identify as Christian. There are particularly high rates of conversion to evangelical Christianity among racial minorities and those living in poverty throughout the world (Louis 2015). The STM organizers with whom I work assert that

the Christian population is significantly higher in the Dominican Republic, but believe that this information is repressed by the government. The country's national museum of Dominican culture, the Museo del Hombre Dominicano, favors Catholic dominance; its permanent exhibits on religion are both tied to Catholicism, showcasing a history of Carnaval and elements of syncretic Catholicism.

Protestant missionaries began to arrive to the Dominican Republic in the 19th century. The Pentecostal church, in particular, developed a significant presence throughout the 20th century and is the fastest growing Protestant group. Other groups that are prominently present include Assemblies of God, the Dominican Evangelical Church, Baptists, and Seventh-day Adventists. More recently, many Latter-day Saint and Jehovah's Witness missions have been established and are growing in size. Also relevant to the context of my research is the influence of Afro-Caribbean religions, particularly Haitian Vodou, which is commonly practiced among Haitians in the bateyes. Dominican Christianity is also syncretized with musical and oral traditions of Afro-Caribbean religions. Among Pentecostals, this could involve spirit possession and speaking in tongues. The more obvious African influences converge around worship music, which may include several African instruments, including congas, bongos, and tambora. Merengue and the guira, a Taino instrument, also complement worship styles in Protestant churches. It is seemingly standard for store windows and the bumpers of public-transportation vehicles to be adorned with signs professing religious beliefs. The most common graffiti tag that I observed was religious, a simple *Cristo Viene* spray-painted in black letters.

Among the STM teams and organizations with which I work, there are various approaches to evangelization and outreach. DRM is exclusively an STM-receiving organization and hosts an average of 60 teams a year; it is affiliated with a hospital that was built by STM teams, and with a church that has several branches. DRM's teams participate in humanitarian and development efforts, mostly in the bateyes, including installing water-filtration systems, providing free or low-cost medical care, improving access to education (including providing scholarships), and building homes. DRM's work takes place mostly in the bateyes, but sometimes at company-owned neighborhoods in town and with other organizations, such as orphanages. DRM is Haitian-Dominican led, but it has a board of directors based in the United States. The founder of DRM, Stevenson, and his son, Abraham, the current DRM president, are mythologized through narrative. The founder was renowned for teaching sugar-cane workers how to measure the sugar cane that they cut, an act of bravery and resistance that empowered them to receive the wages that they earned for their labor. His son, Abraham, was born in a batey; as a bright young orphan, he was adopted by Stevenson, who saw his potential. The president's origins are reflected in the attitudes of the Haitian-Dominican STM organizers, who speak out against the injustices that cane-cutters face, in part because they have a personal connection to them. Whether or not the Dominican organizers' philosophy is incorporated into the American teams' STM projects varies according to each particular team, the members of which bring with them their own beliefs and goals. Some DRM groups may focus on evangelism and others, not at all. The STM experience is tailored to each team and may involve various activities, such as attending baseball

games, taking trips to resorts, and going on booze cruises, as well as myriad informational sessions, such as evening events with guest speakers who run affiliated missions that sponsor college students or practice microfinancing.

ABC, in contrast, is a long-term mission organization that hosts STM teams as part of its outreach. As ABC's primary purpose is running the long-term mission, it does not have as consistent an inflow of STM teams as DRM has; in the years of my study, there were 10-15 teams per year. ABC's primary focus is proselytization. When I first began my research, ABC had four churches; by the time I left the field, ABC had shut down one church but had expanded to incorporate two rural Haitian churches, providing services in Creole and led by a Haitian pastor, and had started plans for construction on another church in partnership with the Hope team. The teams mostly work towards evangelization, with some humanitarian causes as well. ABC's efforts mostly take place in town, in conjunction with the mission's churches. Another key difference from DRM is that ABC is American-led, with American coordinators and Dominican staff. ABC's leaders are American missionaries; the mission was founded in the early 2000s by a married American couple, Bill and Lucy, who started as missionaries in Puerto Rico for many years, and then later throughout the Dominican Republic. Shortly before I began my research, Bill and Lucy retired and another American couple, Jason and Andrea, took over from them. Much younger than Bill and less experienced, Jason was at the start of his career as a head missionary when I began my research. His practice of missionization is informed by ideas that promote self-sufficiency; his approach is to "equip and empower" Dominicans. Jason likes to joke that a good missionary should be putting

himself out of a job, not stuck in the field for decades without any move toward local religious independence. By the time that I left the field in 2018, he had begun to attain just that, transitioning from an in-country missionary to a new role as Director of Missions, focused on fundraising in the US with monthly visits to check up on local leaders and to run STMs. The STMs led by Jason are less independent that those at DRM and are always religious in focus. They include attending church services, regular prayer, and evangelism.

All of the STM teams of my study self-identified as Protestant, and all but one as evangelical. In the US, "evangelical" has become a sort of catch-all term that is often treated as synonymous with white, politically conservative Christians, although evangelicals are a racially and politically diverse group. Depending on how the category is defined, "evangelical" can encompass between one-third and one-tenth of Americans. Evangelical groups are generally characterized by their shared beliefs in four religious tenets:1) the Bible is the Word of God; 2) Jesus Christ is "God in the flesh" who lived a sinless life, died to atone for human sin, and was physically resurrected; 3) the path to salvation is through God's grace, which is achieved through religious conversion marked by being "born again" in Christ; 4) Christians are called to proselytize or evangelize to others.

The 20 STMs with which I worked originated almost exclusively from the Midwest and the South, including Missouri, Kansas, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, South Carolina, and Florida. The only state outside of these regions that was represented was Connecticut, where two DRM groups originated. I observed

some of these teams only one time; others returned annually or multiple times, allowing me to observe them more than once. These latter groups, often mentioned by name throughout this dissertation, include the Making a Difference team, the Good Samaritans, the Hope team, and the Freedom team. Most groups were predominantly made up of white American-born US citizens. Many teams were youth-oriented, but most were a mix of ages. The teams were comprised of slightly more women than men. However, the leadership positions on the teams were almost entirely occupied by men, reflecting gender roles common in evangelical churches. These gender demographics were similar to those of Dominican STM participation and leadership. In both ABC and DRM, all local guides, coordinators, and religious leaders, were men. The only women employed by ABC worked as cooks for the teams. DRM employed women to cook and both men and women to work as interpreters.

Most of the Dominican participants in my study are members at the ABC plant churches that are led by Dominican pastors. The first of these churches was founded in 2000; this church was also my primary research site and the Dominican community that I got to know the best. During my 2017–2018 fieldwork, the church was led by Pastor Ricardo, with support from his wife Elsa, who oversaw the children's and women's ministries, and their high-school-age son and daughter, who led the church's worship services and were also youth leaders. When I was not staying at DRM's mission compound, I lived with the ABC pastoral family, which provided me with virtually around-the-clock access to the church and to STM-related activities and discussions.

I first gained access to ABC missions through a friend from college who had participated in an ABC STM. She put me in touch with Joe, the STM organizer of the Making a Difference team, who recruited volunteer interpreters through our shared alma mater's Spanish department. When I reached out to Joe, he asked to meet me in person at a coffee shop. Thinking that he had questions or concerns regarding my research, I was surprised when this meeting turned out to be a job interview of sorts, so that he could determine whether I was qualified to be a volunteer on the trip. This approach is in stark contrast to the for-profit mission organizations, who generally accept anyone of adult age who can afford to pay for the trip.[7] Joe had even contacted my undergraduate Spanish professors to confirm my Spanish abilities and my background of working with Spanish-speaking children, showing how seriously he took his mission. Whatever feelings he may have had about my research—which only came up in our conversation that day when I introduced it—took a backseat to my potential contributions to his mission as an interpreter.

In contrast, the other STM leaders to whom I would later reach out showed little concern with my goals, qualifications, or who I was and why I would be following them. Mostly, the STM leaders felt comfortable with me and my research based on my connections and already-established approval from ABC and DRM that I had developed

[7] STMs are quite varied, so, for the purposes of qualitative research, it made sense to limit the types of STM that I studied. I excluded studying for-profit organizations. All of the STMs and their organizing partners that I studied are non-profit, falling under the category of 501(c)(3) religious organizations. I decided to study non-profit rather than for-profit organizations so that I would be able to focus my attention on moral-subject formation during STM encounters rather than on the claims of unethical and corrupt behavior that are often leveled against for-profit STMs. However, such accusations followed the non-profit organizations as well, a matter that I will touch on in Chapter 6.

during that first trip. About half of the teams to whom I reached out indicated that they would have no issue with my conducting research, provided that I ask permission from their US volunteers. No mention was made of asking for permission from the Dominican participants with whom they worked. This reflects the unequal relationship between American and Dominican participants in STMs, during which Americans do not always seek Dominicans' consent for such things as taking photographs and allowing untrained youths to practice medical procedures. Furthermore, it is an example of what motivates the common criticisms, outlined earlier in this chapter, that STMs and other forms of volunteer tourism cater to the tourist experience, with little regard for helping local people. During my fieldwork, I obtained informed consent from my primary research participants, both American and Dominican, in accordance with institutional review board (IRB) protocol.

In order to avoid repeating the historically common erasure, in both anthropology and tourism, of local people's rights, I took the practice-of-involvement approach (Paley 2001) so that I could provide a maximally holistic account of STMs and establish equivalence of status between myself as a fieldworker and my research participants. This was necessary because, unlike other anthropologists in their field sites, I was not "an ambiguous and temporary outsider…able to avoid total identification…and hence free to move…and to perceive the field setting from a variety of angles" (Goodman 2000, 162). Being identified as a tourist in a tourist destination can be difficult for a researcher to overcome in terms of establishing research relations and influencing data collection (Stronza 2001, 274). As an American seeking to establish research relationships with

Dominicans, I needed to distinguish myself from the American STM volunteers, who, like me, were also asking them questions and taking photographs. My success at this varied; because I spent the majority of my time with the ABC church and living with the pastoral family, ABC participants got to know me as a researcher, although still associated me with STMs. However, because DRM STMs take place in a different batey each time and because many of the participants are Haitian and only speak Haitian Creole, it was harder to establish my identity in that manner. By living in the Dominican Republic, speaking Spanish, and participating in both the joint and separate activities of the American and Dominican groups, I carefully navigated my positionality as an American, cultivating relationships with each group.

In conducting, analyzing, and writing this research, I have constantly reflected on my own positionality. My background is very similar to those of my participants as a white American from the Midwest, whose initial introduction to the Dominican Republic was through my participant observation of an STM. In observing these first STMs, I found this shared background advantageous, leaning into my perspective as an American tourist. I let my American participants take the lead in asking questions to Jason or Dominican participants, before I began formulating and asking any of my own. As much as my participants were trying to make sense of their experience, I was trying to make sense of STM encounters. In this sense, I have engaged in the practice of studying sideways, or "looking at others who are, like anthropologists, in a transnational contact zone, and engaged there in managing meaning across distances, although perhaps with different interests, under other constraints" (Hannerz 1998, 109). As I stayed in the

Dominican Republic longer and I lived with Dominicans and began "receiving" STMs rather than traveling on them, my perspective widened to also account for how Dominicans experienced and made sense of the encounter. My position became a dual (partial) "insider" status, similar to the American missionaries and Dominican interpreters and organizers who serve as intermediaries of the encounter. These fieldwork relations were thus dynamic, requiring me to draw on "the analytical acumen and existential insights" of my participants (Holmes and Marcus 2008, 82). Interviews often took the form of a collaborative discussion with American interlocutors who regularly practice reflexivity and were sincere in their attempts to avoid engaging in STM practices that have been criticized as harmful or ineffective. I asked for their perspectives on my understandings and analyses of STM ideologies, and American participants would in turn often ask for my perspective on their mission work. Dominican interlocutors were likewise highly aware of STM processes and shared with me what they believe participants often overlook. In the process of analyzing and writing this research, I have attempted to meld not only the perspectives of both American and Dominican participants who are making sense of and acting from "within" the STM, but also a neo-Marxian perspective that delineates the global processes and powers that act on the encounter and its participants, ultimately playing a critical role in the existence and form of STMs.

I first became interested in the study of STMs because my friends from high school and college particiapted in them regularly, with a few, including my best friend from high school, later becoming long-term missionaries. When I first began preparing

for my pre-dissertation research, they were important interlocutors. Several friends from my college had traveled with Joe (hence my initial introduction to ABC), but I later discovered that high school acquaintances had volunteered with ABC, and once on a STM with DRM, I saw a child wearing the class shirt from my fifth grade graduation. These were revealing experiences for me to reflect on the ways I had always been connected to this community without my knowledge, much like my argument about material relations that I make in this dissertation. STMs and mission work, especially in the Dominican Republic often felt like a very small (trasnantional) community.

Much like STM participants reject the title of "tourist," anthropologists likewise often treat such an association with disdain. As Stronza (2001, 261) writes on the subject: "Anthropologists and tourists seem to have a lot in common. Both spend time exploring the cultural productions and rituals of society, and both carry the status of outsider as they make forays into the lives of others." I tried to be mindful of this position as an American anthropologist-tourist. In what ways did my taking photographs and asking questions differ from my American participants, of which I am at times critical as extractive? I decided from the outset to avoid reproducing poverty porn and white savior narratives common in STM-produced imagery, this included selfies or photographs that focus exclusively on poverty. As I described in the first chapter, these types of photographs are decontextualized from the postcolonial relations that explain the extreme poverty and asymmetric power relations displayed for consumption. In contrast, while I do include "selfies" or depictions of socioeconomic conditions in the Dominican Republic, I have tried to revert the gaze back on American culture to denormalize it. The subject of these

photographs is not Dominicans or conditions of the Dominican Republic, but how American volunteers encounter and depict themselves and their surroundings. There are limitations to representing the process of othering without reproducing it, so I have also tried to contextualize these photographs through the text of this dissertation so that they do not fetishize Dominican poverty or American volunteerism. The images that I have included which depict STM activities, such as prayer, were curated to include depictions of Dominican volunteers working alongside Americans as agents in the STM not only as recipients, when they are too often left invisible in American representations of the encounter. Consent and protecting my participants' identities were also important to me. I only took photographs if I had explicit permission from the subjects of the photograph and have obscure any identifying features in their reproduction here.

After initially observing several STMs, I soon was unofficially assigned a kind of intermediary role. Both Americans and Dominicans would confide in me about members of the other group, and members of both groups would also call on me to intervene on their behalf. This dual positioning provided me with a wealth of research data, and also deepened both sides' trust in me. Similarly, because of my bilingual capabilities and cultural knowledge, I was often called upon as an interpreter, which sometimes involved relaying unfavorable requests or information. Most frequently, I was called upon by Dominicans to negotiate financial requests with Americans. In these situations, I tried my best to avoid interpreting by finding another interpreter or encouraging them to communicate what they could themselves, as one of my research goals was to collect data on communication between the groups across linguistic and cultural divides. However,

sometimes interpreting was unavoidable, and it gave me opportunities to be privy to conversations that I otherwise would have missed, thus expanding my understanding of how STMs function in the Dominican Republic. These situations required delicate balancing; I was selective in deciding for whom I would translate, only doing so when both parties knew me well and my neutral stakes in the interaction.

Beyond my identity as an American, I also had to navigate my own religious beliefs. Anthropologists of religion have long debated the role of the researcher's religious identity, an insider/outsider debate of an intensity rarely encountered in other subfields. As some anthropologists of Christianity have observed, many anthropologists within this subfield, especially those who study STMs, are practicing Christians. Since my research is grounded in participant observation, I participated in religious practices alongside my research participants, so my own religious beliefs were rarely questioned. I have tried to be mindful of ways in which my different religious beliefs and other biases may have influenced my research.

Methods and Analysis

The research presented in this dissertation takes the form of longitudinal, multi-sited ethnographic research on a situation of contact between two groups. Ethnography as an experience-based form of investigation has been heralded as the "true political science for the 21st century" (Greenhouse 2012, 2) because it has the potential to capture the interplay among institutions, cultural constructs, and social life. Thus, ethnography offers more than mere—or even "thick" (Geertz 1973)—description of culture. In its contemporary forms, ethnography demystifies processes of cultural reproduction and

illuminates the role of institutions in shaping social and political dynamics. An ethnographic approach to morality, such as the one offered by this dissertation, can offer a nuanced understanding of how moral subjectivity, an elusive concept, is socialized, negotiated, and performed across cultures through engagements in everyday life, including religious beliefs, cultural practices, and social relations.

Previous research on volunteer tourism, much like the practice of volunteer tourism, has privileged the experiences, desires, and voices of Western volunteers while sidelining those of local, typically non-Western, participants. Indeed, this is similar to the trend in the anthropology of tourism as a whole. Amanda Stronza (2001, 261) proposes that the study of tourism is divided conceptually into two parts, each with incomplete explanations: the origins of tourism, which focuses almost exclusively on tourists; and the impacts of tourism, which focuses almost exclusively on the host country. Stronza contends that scholars should study alternative forms of tourism, such as ecotourism or volunteer tourism, and should shift their goal to explore how "tourism can generate social, economic, and environmental benefits for local communities while also creating truly transformative experiences for tourists" (2001, 262). Similarly, the anthropology of missionization has taken a partial approach that considers either missionaries or local populations at the exclusion of the other. This dissertation follows the call to attend to the plurality of experiences on both sides of the encounter and to seek a holistic understanding of the impacts of tourism. Such an approach responds to broader calls coming from within and outside the discipline in the late 20th century (e.g. Asad 1973; Clifford 1986) to decolonize anthropology by taking such measures as 1) delineating the

relationship between colonialism and anthropology, 2) “writing culture” in new ways that reflect on the positionality of the ethnographer, 3) developing theories of colonialism and globalization, and 4) turning the ethnographic gaze back on the West in an effort to denaturalize and denormalize Western culture and institutions (Faier and Rofel 2014). I strive to take all of these approaches in my fieldwork, my data analyses, and my ethnographic writing. Although I focus on the discourses and practices of American STM participants in this dissertation, it is informed by interviews with Dominicans and by the significant amounts of time that I spent otherwise engaged with them; their voices are also presented throughout.

The burgeoning study of volunteer tourism offers many contributions to anthropological research. The study of STMs in particular involves examining missionization as a bi-directional, agentive encounter that potentially de-Westernizes the traditionally conceived reproductive and transformative dimensions of missionization, while at the same time by focusing on American participants, denormalizes Western culture. The multi-sited ethnographic approach that I employed enabled me to follow the movements of missionization, breaking down the macro-level processes of transnationalism as it is localized across sites in specific on-the-ground ways. My encounter-based study examines how engagement between unequal groups from distinct sociocultural worlds produces new meanings and subjectivities (Faier and Rofel 2014). For this reason, I, like most of my participants, do not use the term “mission trip,” which, although colloquially preferred and commonly used, is problematic in that it normalizes the white or Western tourist’s gaze and relegates local people to the role of unchanging,

passive objects. I refer to STMs as encounters in order to capture the ways that they can function as dynamic and transformative experiences in which meanings and subjectivities emerge between actors who have "different cultural backgrounds and unequally positioned stakes in their relationships" (Faier and Rofel 2014, 364). Such an encounter approach, attentive to the making and remaking of culture between two or more culturally and socially distinct groups, comes out of the critical turn in ethnography (Clifford 1986; Gupta and Ferguson 1997), which moves beyond the study of culture as uniform and static or as bounded by space and time. The study of STMs as encounters is an attempt to decolonize the study of missions, insofar as anthropological research on STMs has focused primarily on the Western missionizers; to a lesser extent, this is true of work on the anthropology of tourism as well. Anthropological discourses, not unlike volunteer-tourist discourses, have been perpetuated through their construction of cultural distinctions between self and others. Both anthropologists and STM organizers have relied on a sense of place to confine and define culture as different and other (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). Approaches that developed out of the critical turn have equipped ethnography to better examine larger global movements and processes, such as neoliberalism and postcolonialism. These developments also formalized discussions on the practice of anthropology as cultural critique (Fischer and Marcus 1999, xv). According to Fischer and Marcus (1999, xvi), anthropology "is increasingly the discovery of worlds that are familiar or fully understood by no one." These worlds include "powerful alternative emergent modernities" Fischer and Marcus 1999, xvi). Just as my American and Dominican participants seek understanding of the vast differences

before them, my project seeks to contribute to the understanding of an increasingly complex system of global interconnections. Such an understanding will always be impartial and requires multiple perspectives—including American, Dominican, and anthropological.

The encounter approach led me to certain methodological choices, including examining both the American and Dominican sides of the encounter and having multiple research sites. This approach helped to reveal that, although STMs are characterized by asymmetrical power relations, the dynamics of power are complex, especially the ways in which Dominicans maintain agency or are afforded influence. Toward these ends, I strive to advance the study of missionization and volunteer tourism as multi-directional processes that are entangled with other postcolonial processes. A key methodological approach was my focus on the ways in which both American and Dominican youths come to intersubjectively experience and shape the STM. Tourism, even ethical tourism, is by design centered on, or mostly on, the experiences of tourists, and tourists valorize distance and difference as authentic. The earlier focus on the tourist side of the encounter falsely implies a passivity on the part of local people, a willingness to be subjected to the tourist gaze, when, in fact, local people play important roles in shaping encounters. This leaves us with partial understanding of tourism encounters and overlooks entirely why local people and tourists engage in tourism in particular ways, as well as how local people perceive outsiders (Stronza 2001, 262, 272). An encounter approach to tourism depicts tourism more holistically and also subverts the spatialization of otherness (Gupta

and Ferguson 1997) by explicating the ways in which "self" and "other" are interdependently constructed categories.

STMs are designed around the American encounter with difference. Much like other tourists, STM volunteers typically only experience one or, at most, a few encounters at their destination. This means that the immediate impact of an STM may be quite significant, but, as the name suggests, its duration is likely to be "short"; most volunteers return to their normal lives back home after only a week. In contrast, Dominican participants experience multiple encounters with Americans each year, even a new group every week; for some Dominicans, STMs may be part of their everyday lives. My approach was tailored differently to whether I was working with Dominicans or Americans to account for their different stakes as well as their disparate experiences of STMs. One way that I address the imbalance of experience between American and Dominican STM participants is by taking a longitudinal approach that tracks several of the same American groups, which were often comprised of the same members, multiple times. Importantly, this dissertation represents one of the first longitudinal studies on STM volunteers; other studies have examined their participation as a "one and done" phenomenon. Because of the inherently short duration of STMs, especially for American participants, published monographs on STMs, even anthropological accounts, have likewise been the products of short-term research. My longitudinal approach to something that, by design, is intended to be short enabled me to examine multiple instances of the same STM team and to develop a holistic perspective on the ways in which STMs and other forms of religious and secular service projects socialize morality

over time, the endurance of that moral socialization, and how STM practices and ideologies shifted over time.

In line with my longitudinal and cyclical research design, I also investigated STMs across multiple sites in order to better capture emergent global trends and the macro-level social order in which there is no simple distinction between global and local. I accomplish this through examining the main sites of circulation and interaction, across different locations, media spaces, and junctures in time. Following my participants across interlocking, multiple sites, I highlight the relations and hybridity between the periphery and the center and delineate the micro-processes of globalization at local and individual levels (Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Marcus 1995). Specifically, my multi-sited approach enables me to examine the same American youths' religious beliefs and participation pre- and post-STM encounter. Although most of my research took place in the Dominican Republic, I also followed the post-STM religious participation of some teams after they returned to the US. American and Dominican STM participants often continue their social relations long after the STM is over. These communications are made easier (and easier to track) by the internet and social media, which were used increasingly during my five years of research. These post-STM digital communications are important to Americans and Dominicans enduring relations and comprise a third "site" of my research. By comparing a variety of sites and contexts, I am able to document the ways in which specific discursive practices, religious ideologies, and moral subjectivities are mobilized and made salient in the wider community. By following participants after the STMs, I am able to ascertain how and to what extent the STM experience continues to

shape the ways in which youths conceptualize and enact moral subjectivity through language, participation, and interaction beyond the STM.

Ultimately, since world processes are manifested locally and specifically, undertaking an ethnography of the particular enables me to subvert the process of othering and construct a more humanistic portrayal of life as lived (Abu-Lughod 1991, 148, 157). On that note, it is important to clarify that my research should not be generalized or taken as descriptive of all STMs, or even all STMs in the Dominican Republic. I examine the quotidian within the exceptional—the everyday particulars of the face-to-face encounters that characterize STMs. Toward these ends, I employ mixed methods, relying on participant observation, interviews, and media analysis. In using these methods, I aim to defetishize global/local dichotomies and construction of the Other by demonstrating the ways that transnational practices connect and reconfigure cultures and beliefs.

Among the goals of STMs is the (re)socialization and (re)affirmation of religious identities among young American Christians during a crucial transitional period in their church participation (Occhipinti 2009). Therefore, I focused my attention on key American and Dominican youth participants between the ages of 18 and 29[8] by interviewing them and following their participation in activities related to their church attendance and civic engagement. Focal youths were identified and recruited based on their attendance and participation in church-related events, especially STMs. Those

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[8] The original age range for focal participants was 18–24 and was intended to capture the experiences of those who were of traditional college age. I adjusted this range to 18–29 as my participants aged during the course of my fieldwork. This range of 18–29 also better reflects local Dominican definitions of the category *joven adulto*, or young adult.

selected were active participants in their church communities, and some had official leadership designations. I also conducted interviews with American and Dominican adult leaders, including missionaries, pastors, and STM leaders and coordinators, in order to better contextualize youth perspectives and STM practices within broader Christian beliefs.

A rich ethnography needs to pay attention to what people say and do. In research on large-scale global processes, it is sometimes the case that methodologies do not account for the quotidian experiences of actors. My observations of participants engaging in the encounter are contextualized within both historical and contemporary local and global dynamics. As part of my participant observation, I observed, recorded, and took detailed notes on regularly occurring activities during STMs. I was also an active participant observer in daily religious practices, including weekly services, youth activities, and church meetings. These formal religious settings were sites in which to observe highly stylized discursive practices, such as group prayer and religious instruction, that (re)produce religious ideologies and moral subjectivities (Keane 2004). I also observed and recorded regularly occurring activities and everyday interactions during STMs, focusing on the various religious-outreach and socioeconomic-outreach practices. These settings revealed the ways in which official discourses and religious practices influence how participants talk about morality, especially in relation to one another.

Building on recent scholarship in linguistic anthropology, which has shown the influential role that language plays in moral-subject formation (Fader 2009; Muehlebach

2012), I focused on the role of language in religious rituals and giving, particularly the ways that language can be used to perform and to encode agency (Duranti 2004, 454). I examined how individuals discursively construct and negotiate moral landscapes in which they situate themselves in relation to others (Klein 2009). I recorded activities and then transcribed and annotated the recordings in accordance with conventions commonly applied in linguistic anthropology (Ochs 2004). These activities include everyday interactions during STMs, religious discourses, and ritualized practices, such as sermons, testimonies, and prayer. Some of these ritual acts took place across multiple languages, but in the same register, making them a fundamental way for American and Dominican participants to co-construct subjectivity. In considering naturalistic recordings of what was said and done, I explore how discourses are deployed as powerful tools for seeking legitimacy and authority. In so doing, I avoid romanticizing STM participants and regard power and resistance as intertwined.

In order to address how STM participation shapes American and Dominican youths' beliefs and worldviews, my participant observation is supplemented by means of semi-structured, person-centered interviews (Hollan 2005) in which I asked open-ended questions and allowed interviewees to guide the direction of the interview. Participant observation enhances interviewing, from shaping interviewing practices to selecting interviewees. Interviews, in turn, enabled me to investigate such matters as whether, and in what ways, participants reproduce STM discourses when formulating their own personal narratives. I regard linguistic behavior as an important form of data, paying attention to matters of grammatical form and stylistic variation as well as to parafeatures

of interviewees' responses. I examine interviewees' discussions of identity construction and world-making as they were verbally realized. Aspects of linguistic behavior such as moral stance-taking offer salient information for understanding both the content of a person's practices and the ideologies that mediate between the individual and larger social structures.

My interview questions followed a narrative structure and I analyzed the interviews in accordance with the theories and methods of narrative analysis (Ochs 2004). I invited interviewees to reflect on the STM and their religious beliefs in the hope that their doing so would illuminate how the STM experience affected their worldviews. These interviews revealed the transformative capacities of STMs. As my focus was narratives of personal experience, I analyzed interview responses as a type of discourse genre, a mode of cognition, and a social activity (Ochs 2004, 264). As Capps and Ochs (1995, 21) explain, "It is not 'really' what happened but rather experiencers' theories of what happened that provide continuity between past, present, future, and imagined lives." The interviews were structured by contradictions and connections between ideologies (Briggs 2007). For these reasons, interviewing and observation are methods that work best together, and I paid special attention to the complex relationships among narrative form, narrative performance, and referential context (Mattingly and Garro 2000).

A third area of my ethnographic research was collection of print and digital media. I collected instances of official discourses about the STM encounter that were produced by American STM leaders. These discourses are found in such materials as pamphlets, annual reports, and websites. I also collected instances of unofficial discourses about the

STM encounter, such as those produced by the STM participants on social media. By observing STMs alongside discursive representations of those STMs, I conducted an intertextual study of STM representation. This enables me to show how discourses interact with each other and how they are taken up by participants, including how discourses are produced and politicized. Representations of STMs on social media, from narrative construction of the experience to marketing for future STM-goers, are an important part of STMs. The media produced in the contexts of the STMs that I observed are part of their discursive formation, establishing relations of power and truth that are produced, circulated, and received in specific sociocultural contexts. I analyzed the content as well as the production, circulation, and reception of such media, considering the ways in which media shape and are shaped by everyday practices. Media can be used to cultivate a social identity and as a forum for collective participation (Spitulnik 1999). New media has the potential to create more egalitarian access over the construction of the mission field, opening local viewpoints and platforms alongside those produce by the missionaries. The official Facebook and Instagram pages of the churches and organizations that I observed are embraced by members as tools of communication that enhance their projects, and the contents of those pages are often reposted on personal pages. Significantly, Facebook has become a public forum of self-display that "can provoke material reactions" (Jones, Schieffelin, and Smith 2011, 27). Facebook and other social media pages reveal the ways that the mission's social identity is constructed through choice of topic, code, register, and style. My multimodal approach involving

media analysis, participant observation, and interviews reveal the ways participants may (re)produce or negotiate these discourses in their everyday lives.

After fieldwork, I analyzed my observations, recordings, interviews, and media materials, using the methods of narrative analysis (Ochs 2004) and discourse analysis (Blommaert 2005). I integrate these two modes of analysis in order to gain insight into the negotiation of moral ideologies and to examine how different discursive modes mediate participants' experiences and understandings of the expressed ideologies. A criticism of discourse-based research on identity is that inquiry is limited to the mechanics of identity construction (Modan 2007, 290). By examining spoken and written modes of discourse, I am able to discern how formal and informal discourses interact intertextually and how discourse mediates the understandings through which STM encounters take shape and mediate future experiences. In considering various types of interactional contexts, I reveal the ways that discourses and ideologies complement or contradict one other.

I used MAXQDA, a qualitative-data-analysis software program, to code for thematic elements that reveal the ways in which narrative practices and moral discourses influence how participants talk about and practice moral subjectivity. My analyses of my recordings take into account aspects of context, including the observer's paradox (Ochs 1979), as well as my own practices of documenting, transcribing, and analyzing. I approach language and narratives as they are used to structure lives and "inhabit and shape, present, past, and future realms of existence" (Capps and Ochs 1995, 14). I consider everyday communicative practices to be just like any other human action in that

they are embedded in larger social practices and built around speech and other semiotic resources. Language as action encompasses interactively organized processes that are publicly recognized events and reflexively linked to the ongoing production of these events (Goodwin 2000), so I consider the context of the communicative event, including the surrounding environment and social relations of the participants.

CHAPTER 3

SHORT-TERM MISSIONS AS CROSS-CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS

Figure 5: An American STM leader documents a batey to share with his church in the US.

The dirt road runs straight northwest for about two miles off the highway ten minutes east from [the city]. The orange sand smokes lightly behind the bus tires, and on either side the sugar cane opens green fronds to a height of about five feet - a little more than half grown in these fields now. Dirt roads and tracks branch off here and there into the fields; the bus blares at each intersection, but does not slow.

Then there is a turn, and a couple of hundred yards beyond, the shacks appear. Weather-beaten wood, once painted green. Corrugated tin roofs, at best, many sheets bent, twisted, rusty. A sleeping pig, a chicken; in the doorways of the tiny huts the faces stare, the older with resignation, perhaps, or sometimes a slight smile; the young adults more often with indifference or even hostility; and the children. Children are everywhere: the teenagers more distant; the younger ones eager, curious.

But we, uncertain, huddle at first by the buses, confused about how to connect with these people across a dizzying abyss of wealth and poverty, a poverty - and a wealth - that spreads its hidden roots far underground into the humid darkness behind our seeing, below our capacity to envision the possible.

> -- From Kathy's personal journal, reproduced as a testimonial on the Dominican Republic Mission (DRM) website

From the bus ride bouncing through the sugar-cane fields to the hesitant pause as the American and Dominican groups encounter one another for the first time, uncertain how to act, this excerpt from Kathy's personal journal is in some ways similar to my own observations that open this dissertation—a rural Haitian-Dominican village that is removed from American life in which both groups seek to find community and understanding. Her narrative, like my own, reflects an on-the-ground experience of the encounter that is culturally interpreted. However, it has been my intent to give a texture to that perspective from "within" with an "above" look on the global processes that instantiate these interconnections prior, during, and after the encounter as well. As I explained in my first chapter, American short-term-mission (STM) participants and proponents frame STMs as important, even potentially life-changing experiences for Americans and recipient communities. In that chapter, I described the transformative power of STMs, namely, that they enable laypersons to participate in missionization at a face-to-face level of engagement. American STM participants and local people come into contact, in some cases for the first time, with others whose lives are drastically different from their own; and they attempt to learn from one another and to discover what they may share despite these differences. Key elements of Kathy's narrative of an STM underscore the significance of these types of cross-cultural encounters, the frameworks in which they are constituted, and the ways in which they shape participants' understanding of the world.

First, her account, like others to which I will refer in this chapter, while sincere in its perceptions and intentions, projects romantic notions of life in a "Third World" country that are ultimately otherizing. In many ways, the team's experiences in the Dominican Republic are shaped by pre-existing frameworks and imaginings that are inculcated through media and other discourses on "developing" countries. These, in turn, give rise to confirmation bias for the American participants, who reproduce them in their own narratives of the encounter on social media and elsewhere, creating a feedback loop. Brian Howell, in his ethnography on STMs (2012), presents similar findings, demonstrating that participant-produced STM narratives and discourses draw on Christian rhetoric and are highly formulaic. In fact, his research on STMs was first inspired by the narratives that he had heard, which were reproduced almost identically regardless of the American's background, the STM's destination, or its intended project (e.g., medical treatment, construction, proselytization). Kathy's description follows a similar formula. Her journal entry replicates popular Western discourses of development and globalization. It draws on tenets of modernization theory, the warped teleology in which First World countries must intervene in weaker, "underdeveloped" countries, which lack the agency or knowledge needed for development because they are perceived as too backwards and traditional. Take for instance the ways in which Kathy recalls how their bus removes them from modern life to "dirt roads" and shacks and huts made of "weather-beaten wood." She depicts Haitian-Dominican plantation villages as being in a state of dilapidation and filth, reproducing negative stereotypes of impoverished people as unclean and even uncivilized. For Kathy, not only does the batey lack development, it

is a place where animals reside in or near houses and adults react to the Americans with hostility. The adults are contrasted with innocent children, who are everywhere.

Kathy's portrayal of poverty is decontextualized from the larger sociohistorical context of Dominican sugar plantations, including the history of forced migration and slavery and the continued lack of economic opportunity and abuses of labor rights. Many participants ask about corruption and whether the country has a dictator, but show little interest in the Dominican government otherwise. Cole's (2012) indictment of the White Savior Industrial Complex criticizes this narrow focus: "feverish worry over that awful African warlord. But close to 1.5 million Iraqis died from an American war of choice. Worry about that." Ignorant of the production of poverty and seeing only the product, Americans typically do not question why the village exists in this state, nor do they consider their own practices or their own government's policies. Popular modernization theories, the culture-of-poverty thesis, and other prominent everyday discourses of development implicitly hold the residents of the village responsible for their conditions.

Kathy's last paragraph mitigates these negative images of poverty somewhat by articulating a powerful reflection on the apparent class differences between the two groups involved in the encounter. Kathy writes, "But we, uncertain, huddle at first by the buses, confused about how to connect with these people across a dizzying abyss of wealth and poverty." Her use of the word "huddle" suggests fear of the Other, portraying the Americans as keeping close together in an almost defensive formation. According to Kathy, the mutual uncertainty between the two groups is primarily due not to cultural or linguistic differences, but to what she describes as an "abyss" of wealth difference that

separates them. As the sentence continues, it seems that Kathy and other team members are trying to make sense of the gross, “dizzying” economic inequalities that exist between them and the Dominicans and trying to connect with them despite this division. Continuing, she describes “a poverty—and a wealth—that spreads its hidden roots far underground into the humid darkness behind our seeing, below our capacity to envision the possible.” Kathy’s narrative identifies class differences as the primary division between the two groups, and she even recognizes the inequality[9] that necessarily serves as the basis for their mission encounter. In referencing the hidden roots of poverty and wealth, she astutely perceives that class differences invisibly shape cultural beliefs and values in ways of which participants are not always aware. Class status influences what and how we see. Kathy does not offer us a way to “envision the possible,” but other participants do frequently describe how they believe that their shared religion and the power of God enables them to translate across linguistic barriers and cultural and class differences, as I will consider in later chapters. Neither does Kathy indicate what that “possible” would look like. Perhaps it is not unlike a Christian understanding of heaven, where all peoples can see beyond the limits of their socialized worldviews and recognize their shared humanity, despite their differences; or perhaps it is an earthly future without poverty or inequality.

[9] It is important to note here that, in my observations and interviews, American STM participants almost never used the word *inequality*. Kathy’s mention of an “abyss” is the closest example. I use the term to capture the differences between the groups and to articulate the concept to which Americans allude but never actually name. I will discuss this discursive phenomenon more in Chapter 6.

Kathy's narrative of her first encounter in the *bateyes* also suggests that she and others are in the process of making sense of these new experiences, which ultimately reshape their understandings of the world and themselves. As the group's uncertainty about how to act with local people suggests, an STM encounter may be the first time an American participant travels internationally or has sustained interactions with people from another culture, away from the banal multicultural models in the US, in which "diversity" is publicly expressed at select times and in sanctioned spaces and ways (Thomas 2008). STM participants are deeply affected by their interactions with impoverished communities. The ways in which they discuss their experiences indicate a transformation of their understandings of the world. Confronted with such class and cultural differences, participants try to make sense of their own relationship to the poverty that they see in front of them as agents for change.

This chapter foregrounds STMs as a form of religious tourism in which volunteer-tourists seek meaning, authenticity, and spiritual growth through encounters across cultural and economic difference. Interpersonal encounters with Otherness can redefine participants' personal sense of identity as they seek to find unity, in unfamiliar cultural contexts, with people who are, in many ways, quite unlike themselves. STMs involve firsthand observations of, and interactions with, local people as well as participation in everyday mission practices and work. These encounters and acts constitute a pedagogical process that is designed to spark self-reflection and to cultivate moral attitudes, practices, and spiritual capital in order to reinforce religious beliefs and practices. Most notably, faith-based encounters such as STMs affirm or reshape participants' religious beliefs and

moral subjectivities, or their sense of the self as a moral actor. Confronted with the impoverished conditions that they witness during STMs, American participants try to reconcile their understandings of their own and others' relationships with God and their understandings of themselves as agents in the world. As STMs involve encounters with cultural, racial, and class differences, they have the potential to shape understandings of globalization, poverty, and economic inequality, racial and other forms of discrimination, and social (in)justice.

I examine the micro-level cross-cultural social interactions as well as the moral discourses and ethical practices (Foucault 1997) of the STM encounter. In this chapter, I lay out the ways that missionaries act as tour guides to American participants, socializing moral ideas about culture, poverty, and economic inequality through multiple technologies of the self. These ideas assign a moral subjectivity to class status and cultural behaviors, which are decontextualized from the larger macro processes that foreground the encounter. I will first make the case for the ways that encounters with Otherness, in particular, vast global class differences, introduce new understandings of the world. I then explore how an affected habituation of the body to local life expresses an imagined phenomenology of poverty. Finally, I examine two contradictory but intertwined discursive idealizations of poverty through which poverty is simultaneously judged as a vice and admired as a virtue. Both perspectives socialize a moral subjectivity that prepares youths to participate in the evangelical church as financially responsible and globally minded citizens in transnational social structures. Together, these encounters can

motivate changes in various aspects of people's lives, from everyday consumption habits and social relations to religious conversion and choice of vocation.

As international religious service projects designed to alleviate poverty, STMs indoctrinate religious beliefs along with economic values. My research engages with the longstanding Weberian tradition in the social sciences that delineates how religious values shape and are shaped by economic values in ways that influence giving behaviors and ideologies of giving. In particular, I expand on recent studies that explore how moral tropes of late capitalism resonate with volunteering and charitable giving to transform individuals. An encounter is necessarily dialogic, and this is also true of its transformative aspects, including religious, economic, and emotional transformations, which are bi-directional for both Americans and Dominicans. Because this chapter focuses on touristic and class-based encounters, it will mostly focus on Americans who are introduced to a new culture and livelihood.

STMs as Religious Tourism

Those who engage in forms of alternative tourism such as STMs often reject or are uncomfortable with being considered "tourists." When asked by local people whether they are tourists, most American participants balk at the assumption and claim an entirely different status: missionaries. American STM leaders frequently comment disdainfully about other tourists. Although photographic representation is a staple of most STM trips, a few group leaders discourage or even prohibit their members from taking photographs at their mission sites (but not off-site) in order to solidify their positioning in the community as missionaries rather than tourists. Leaders frequently remind STM participants that they

are not tourists and should act as missionaries, demonstrating modest dress and comportment. In his ethnographic study of STMs, Howell (2012, 166) notes that, "with its implications of pleasure and indulgence, tourism was inherently incompatible with the STM narrative. At the same time, we had several times plotted out in which to travel and do tourist activities." Participants' rejection of the tourist identity and subjective positioning erases the ways in which teams function as tourists in a country whose primary industry is tourism, whether they do so by engaging in typical tourist activities such as spending a day at the beach, lodging at a resort, and haggling for sweatshop-produced souvenirs or by volunteering goods and services to impoverished neighborhoods or visiting local people's homes and churches. In refusing to frame their activities as tourism or even as "ethical" tourism, STM participants overlook the ways that their activities are implicated in, and may contribute to, heightened class stratification, rising subsistence costs, and other prime sources of the very kinds of problems that they hope to alleviate.

Unlike the participants in my research, I use the lens of tourism to probe at the relationships among STMs and political economy, cultural identity, and social change and development in host countries. Like other anthropologists of tourism, I question the dynamics of power between local people and tourists, exploring how societies and cultures change when they are commodified in contexts of tourism and other cross-cultural interactions. I also consider how cultural differences are represented in tourist settings and how these differences are perceived by outsiders (Bruner 1987; Urry 2011; Van den Berghe 1994).

Studies of tourism depict a Western privilege rooted in romantic notions of authenticity (Urry 2011), as distinct from the inauthenticity of a modern world that is characterized by alienation, fragmentation, and superficiality (MacCannell 1984). In this view, travel, especially to pristine, distant locales, provides a pleasurable escape from the modern world, allowing participants to be free and in a liminal state, away from it all. Similarly, the discipline of anthropology, due in part to its colonial roots, was originally premised on entry into the bounded, isolated worlds of untouched others. In anthropology as in tourism, sites at great geographic distance from Western urban and modern life were privileged as authentic and meaningful (Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Marcus 1995). However, authenticity is a subjective quality. Tourists unequipped with ethnographic knowledge rely on popularly circulated stereotypes of peoples and cultures. These stereotypes then become reinforced, as experiences that seem authentic to tourists are (re)constructed by local people for purposes of tourism (Adams 1984). I observed this phenomenon during my research. During church services, Dominicans typically play contemporary worship music. Some of these songs have been translated, with some Dominican influences, from American versions. But when American STM teams attend services, the Dominican church incorporates one or two Dominican worship songs into the program. These songs showcase features of local culture, including dance styles and instruments such as the *guira*, which is typically used in Dominican bachata and merengue. Lively, with dancing and excited clapping, this music seems exotic to Americans, particularly in the context of religious services. The Americans join in as best they can and cite it as one of their favorite parts of attending Dominican churches. Local

songs were not played every time a team visited, but I observed that they were played only when an American group was present. In this way, an idealized portrayal of Dominican culture is constructed and performed for the pleasure and edification of volunteer tourists. Such performances of cultural authenticity are used only sparingly, however, since it is more important for the mission to emphasize the ways that American and Dominican participants are the same. Worship leaders often follow the Dominican music with a worship song with which the Americans are familiar and that can easily be performed bilingually, with the chorus sung by both groups in both English and Spanish. Joe, an STM organizer, recounted the following in his annual report:

> This year, the highlight of the trip for me was simply worshiping with the […] church on Sunday morning – the last day of our trip. Midway through the service the worship team broke into "Mighty to Save" a song that [my wife] and I have worshiped to at our church countless times over the last few years – and it was just an incredible, spirit-filled time of worship for me. Because although we speak a different language than the Dominicans, and have different skin color and live very different lives…we all serve and worship the same God. And actually having the opportunity to worship together was such a wonderful way to wrap up the week as we all celebrated God's goodness and worshiped Him with gratitude for the blessings in our lives.

As this suggests, it is not so much experiencing authentic differences as discovering sameness and unity with fellow Christians despite cultural differences that is highlighted and made meaningful. This exemplifies the ways in which Christian communities, like the ultra-Orthodox communities studied by Fader, have recently moved toward "rejection of a religiosity that is limited to a private, discrete part of one's national identity" (Fader 2011, 331) and toward a cosmopolitan identity, which is sought out through such means

as STMs. These cross-cultural connections are made meaningful to American and Dominican participants alike and are a privileged form of Christian fellowship.

Ideals of authenticity and meaning in tourism are amplified and made even more explicit in alternative tourism. Alternative tourism, like mainstream tourism, is also driven by the desire to escape an increasingly alienating modern world and to find something more real elsewhere. For alternative tourists, this cannot be found in overtly contrived or manufactured environments such as Disney World or in the endless buffets of cruises. Like other green-washing movements of the late 20th and early 21st century, alternative forms of tourism, such as ethical tourism, are designed around sustainable engagement with local communities, environmental causes, or humanitarian projects in off-the-beaten-path destinations. Ethical tourism is defined as "forms of tourism that are consistent with natural, social, and community values, and which allow both hosts and guests to enjoy positive and worthwhile interaction and shared experiences" (Eadington and Smith 1992, 3). Helping poor families can be an outlet or temporary getaway that relieves tourists from the stresses of work and the materialism of everyday life, enabling them to find or create meaning in social experiences.

Volunteer work is particularly appealing to Christian groups that value service and believe that wealth may be incompatible with living a sin-free life. While volunteering abroad, tourists can find meaning as they forge what they perceive as authentic connections with people who live a simpler life. For Christians, this simplicity bestows spiritual capital. They believe that, without wealth and modern possessions and attractions, they can become closer to God. As will be explained in greater depth later in this chapter,

some volunteers sacrifice modern comforts in order to feign an imagined poverty, but, unlike those of local people, these sacrifices are temporary, as the tourists will enjoy the comforts of home once again when the trip is over. In temporarily altering their daily practices, they hope to transform their perspectives on their previously taken-for-granted amenities and privileges in their lives back home. Alternative forms of tourism are generally considered to have more of a positive impact on local communities and on the planet than traditional tourism; they are also thought to heighten tourists' awareness and consciousness and even to lead to a change in values. However, as anthropologists of tourism have demonstrated, ethical tourism has many of the same failings as traditional tourism. It is important to recognize the ways in which alternative tourism reifies difference and reproduces structural inequalities.

Unlike participants in traditional cultural tourism, which centers on displays of (re)constructed authentic culture, STM participants find meaning and authenticity in poverty. In volunteer tourism, poverty is filtered or performed in ways that meet tourists' expectations, assumptions, and stereotypes. For instance, prior to the start of their STM, teams often circulate portrayals of Third World poverty produced by aid organizations, which shape participants' expectations of local living conditions. However, ABC groups, who work in town and do not witness the extreme poverty in the bateyes like DRM groups, express surprise at the relative wealth that they witness and at times doubt whether Dominicans demonstrate as great of a need as they had anticipated. Many compare the Dominican Republic to what they have seen or heard about Africa, where they "could really make a difference." In response, Jason arranges tours of poorer neighborhoods,

which are not always representative of the people with whom the ABC teams work. However, frequently photos taken during these poverty tours are featured in the teams' social media and other promotional materials as representative of the people with whom they had worked. While these photos, such as those of a shantytown or of children walking in a dirt alley, were in fact taken during the course of the STM, the photos are also semifictitious in that they obscure some aspects of the context, such as Dominicans' smartphones and new clothes. They are representations of the wider context of poverty in the country, but are not representations of the people with whom, or neighborhoods where, the STM teams actually worked. Rather, larger discourses of development are intertextually reproduced and ratified in the mission team's own authoritative version of the mission field. These featured photos thus reinforce pre-existing beliefs about economic conditions in the Dominican Republic and, perhaps more important, shape the ways in which STM projects are funded.

Figure 6: American youth participants walk around a rural neighborhood as they evangelize at Dominicans' homes.

Travel is an important means of religious formation and identity construction. It is widely used, for instance, among Jewish youths through Birthright Israel (Kelner 2010). STMs have also been likened by some to modern-day pilgrimages. Howell (2012) applies Victor Turner's classic definition of a pilgrimage, which involves transformation through separation, liminality, and finally, reincorporation. Howell describes how American participants separate themselves physically from the distractions of the external world in order to heighten their experience of the internal world and build spiritual qualities. This is reflected in STM teams' prayers. One leader prays, "We pray that these short-term trips will have a long-term impact for all who participate. We pray that God reveals Himself though these trips and that all who participate will grow spiritually." American teams interact with already established Christian communities, celebrating their shared faith across cultures and class positions as "brothers and sisters in Christ." In addition to connecting with local people, another goal of STMs is for American participants to bond with one another as a group through their experiences and thus strengthen their own religious community back home. According to Howell (2012, 55), "Pilgrims use the physical movement of the trip as a way to experience a social reversal away from the everyday hierarchies of social life to a new temporary space in which they can experience unity and equality." Howell proposes that, unlike the traditional religious pilgrimage, which is based around important holy sites and sacred relics, the STM pilgrimage is centered around the experience of Turner's *communitas,* or sense of community based in shared experience. In addition to *communitas*, STMs become sanctified like pilgrimages

through the acts of seeing and serving the poor. STM sites and local participants are imbued with spiritual qualities and are constructed as blessings, or sanctified.

STM Tourism as a Coming-of-Age Ritual

More than just pilgrimages, STM encounters also function as sites for socializing evangelical values and strengthening commitment to them. Most American STM participants are high-school-age and college-age youths traveling with their parents or church leaders. Around the world, evangelical leaders have been concerned in recent years with conversion both domestically and internationally and with retention of existing membership of the 2nd and later generations of church members in the US. Congregations have emphasized the particular need to appeal to youths in order to grow or simply maintain church membership and attendance (Howell 2012). STMs are marketed to members of the younger generations, who are driven by the desire to travel and to make the world a better place. Young STM participants represent a liminal life stage of world discovery and self-exploration, and in which they (re)make their identity as young adults. STMs and domestic religious service projects have thus become important moments of moral socialization.

In her research on STMs, anthropologist Laurie Occhipinti (2009) characterizes STMs as coming-of-age rituals. Like other such rituals, participation in STMs is often a tradition passed down from parents to children as a way of initiating them into adult life. It may serve as a means of exposing them to adult life and responsibilities, which in Christian life revolve around religious service and charitable giving. For example, John, a father and middle-school teacher, explains why he decided to participate in an STM with

his daughter, Elsie. He describes how he had traveled twice to Mexico when he was in high school to “do mission work” at an orphanage.

> You go down there to Mexico and see how they didn’t have anything. Their parents gave them love. And you know being with the kids and seeing how they live. They had a soccer ball. That was enough fun for them. Yet they were so full of life, of joy. Just the fact that as a high schooler the fact that I was doing something for somebody else and they were going to benefit from it, I think that’s when I decided I wanted to be a teacher….Going on a mission trip was just—I grew up in Oklahoma and I knew that the world was bigger than just where I lived but just getting out and seeing something different, I needed it at that time. I think that’s—that’s why I stayed, that helped me stay in the church and not ever think about leaving. Those are experiences that you don’t get every day.

For John, the STM experience was transformative, serving as a catalyst for him to think differently about the world. It led him to recommit himself to his Christian faith and to devote himself to a career in teaching, a vocation that he sees as purely for other people, much like volunteering at the orphanage. John emphasizes that he needed that type of experience at that time in his life. As a high-school student, he was in a crucial liminal period, a transitional state of becoming an adult. The STM experience changes the ways in which many people, particularly youths, think about the world, about God, and about themselves and their own agency and responsibility. Memories of seeing poverty firsthand and serving others had a lifelong impact on him, and now he wants Elsie to have a similar experience:

> I want my daughter to get out of this that the world is bigger than her high school…I need her to get out of her comfort zone and what better way to do it then to go to a culture where you don’t know anything or speak their language. I think she will appreciate more what she has and shape how she makes decisions down the road, especially on her path with Christ. That’s kind of what I want her to get out of this.

STMs provide space for parents to push their children outside of their comfort zone, giving them opportunities to encounter new people, to try new foods and live without the luxuries of home, and to work hard on the mission's project. Youths appreciate STMs as an opportunity to explore independence and new responsibilities as well as to gain a broader awareness of the world around them. Many youths continue this rite of passage after returning home by becoming baptized or deciding to dedicate themselves to a religious vocation or a vocation in which they perceive themselves as "giving back" to the community, such as education, medicine, or non-profit work.

STM Encounters with Poverty

STMs have so great an impact because the face-to-face encounter with others in different cultural and socioeconomic circumstances can be jarring and surprising, especially for young participants who may not have had previous exposure to such difference. Participants frequently describe "seeing poverty firsthand" as "eye-opening." For instance, in a conversation I had with high-school senior Jessica, she recounted how she had previously watched in disbelief a documentary that followed hopeful Dominicans trying to make it in major-league baseball. "They followed them around and went into the impoverished neighborhoods and I was just watching and thinking, 'Is this real? This can't be real.'" Although Jessica had seen these conditions on TV, she felt disconnected from it. It was not until she could witness the Dominican Republic herself that she could believe in its reality. Similarly, Ally writes in a letter to interested STM participants,

> I was not prepared for what I saw today. I have seen poverty before on television—mostly on special programs that ask viewers to adopt a child from a third-world country. Something inside me stirred as I watched

> these pictures, but after the television was turned off, these emotions faded away. Today I came to the full realization of how abstract television is; I only wish I had the capability to accurately put my thoughts and feelings on paper so that this letter might be more effective than television.

When narrating or explaining their STM experiences, participants frequently reproduce Western epistemologies in which knowing is equated with seeing. A week spent seeing impoverished villages makes real the images and stories that they had previously only heard or read about. It is first-person ritualized experiences, rather than third-person accounts or explanations, that have this effect for evangelical youths.

Many STM participants are so struck by what they see that they feel compelled to share their experiences with members of their congregations back home. A few groups discouraged taking photographs as a way to be present in the moment, as well as to avoid otherizing the local people they would encounter. Most groups, though, encouraged the taking of photographs in order to demonstrate the needs of the mission by providing visible proof of local conditions. For instance, the Hope group, who sends teams three or four times a year, formed a new partnership in 2017 with a batey that they had never visited before. They had been told that this batey was also newly partnered with DRM and had not previously received any STM teams. When the Hope team arrived, Mary Ann, a first-time STM participant, began to document the batey because she was "in shock." She later elaborated, "It's a good thing that I came here because I'm not sure if I could believe it if I hadn't seen it for myself. I had heard that the bateyes are worse [than the town], but I was not ready for this. I just wasn't expecting it to be this level." Greg, the team leader, announced to the group that they would only be working a half-day with the community because he wanted the rest of the time to be spent observing and

documenting life in this batey. Greg was a veteran participant in STMs in the Dominican Republic, and he felt that the conditions in this batey were among the worst that he had seen; he attributed this to the batey's lack of previous STM partnerships. He encouraged the group to take photographs, saying, "I know that I usually encourage you not to, but this is important because how else are we going to be able to document life here and show the people back home what it looks like." Greg reinforces the notion that this type of poverty must be seen to be believed, and even though he believes that the transformative impact and call to help of the batey is greater in person, he relies on his team to take photographs so that they can provide firsthand testimonial accounts to their church when they return, in hopes of generating more support for their mission. These mission-produced representations work similarly to muckraking and "poverty porn" to inspire charitable giving.

STMs are more than entertainment or charity; exposure to global-level class differences can be emotional experiences, as well as educational. STMs are designed much like tour groups. When they are not working on the mission, the long-term American missionaries and Dominican STM organizers are on hand to guide the STM participants through everyday Dominican life as a series of touristic sites, from poverty tours around poor neighborhoods and bateyes to church services and home visits with Dominicans and Haitian-Dominicans. During these tours, basic differences observed by Americans about everyday Dominican life are fetishized and subjected to a (white) tourist's gaze (Urry 2011). Participants stop to take snapshots of the family of five weaving in and out of hectic traffic on a single moped, or to marvel at the skill of a child

with a machete. Acting as tour guides, the missionaries narrate the surroundings and answer the team members' questions. These bilingual interpreters of culture wield great influence in the construction of knowledge in tourism encounters (Cheong and Miller 2004). Participants ask the missionaries and local organizers questions about various aspects of Dominican life, especially economic conditions such as the minimum wage and labor rights. They are told how much a sugar-cane-plantation worker might make and are also told that, despite back-breaking labor, the sugar companies do not provide health care or protections against injury. The teams demand to know how the companies can get away with that, and ask why the government does not step in to ensure that workers are treated better.

The town tours extend beyond mere observation. When accompanied by an employee of ABC or DRM, Americans are invited to talk with the local people and even visit their houses. Here local people become props in living dioramas (Hellier-Tinoco 2011) in order to show what local life is like and to evoke emotions from tourists. One young American woman, Courtney, writes of how she watched the non-stop activity in the batey, the women washing laundry by hand and the children playing with handmade toys. She writes, "While I watched, I heard the words of the Consecration being said. I felt peace, but great sadness." For Courtney, watching local people work and play brings to mind the words of Christ at the Last Supper. The everyday scenes of Dominican life produce a powerful moment of affect. Subjectivities are produced or transformed through processes that occur through small, particular moments like these throughout the encounter.

American teams often claim ownership or responsibility for more positive attributes in the local community. For instance, immediately after being picked up from the airport upon arrival for my first fieldwork experience in 2013, I was taken with the Making a Difference team to one of the plant churches nearby. Jason walked us around, setting up the scene, narrating to us that the church was in a poor part of town that had originally started as a makeshift shantytown, 10–15 years ago. The neighborhood had popped up due to the influx of migrants, mostly Haitian, unsuccessfully seeking work in the rapidly growing tourism industry in that part of the island. Unemployed migrants, having escaped the bateyes, did not want to return to the harsh conditions of plantation life, so they settled there despite not having found work in the formal economy. According to Jason, the neighborhood surrounding the church had initially been called Villa Plywood, a reference to the discarded plywood that had been collected and used to construct the houses. Jason explained to the team that, until recently, Villa Plywood had been very dangerous and poor, with a lot of crime, bars, and machete fights. He explained that the area, though still poor, had improved. Many of the houses were now made of better material and had aluminum roofs. The residents had recently petitioned to have the neighborhood's name changed to Villa Esperanza to reflect the hope and the changes of the neighborhood. Jason took credit for these positive changes while also attributing it to "God's work," claiming that this transformation was largely due to the positive influence and presence of the church, which was planning to open a primary school in the coming month. Most of the members of the Making a Difference team had either helped to construct the church or had donated money to make it possible. Similarly, two members

of the team were interested in seeing a house that had been built for the García family by a previous team from their church. When Jason brought the team there, the team referred to it as "the house we built" and "our house," even though they had not been present when the home was constructed. Volunteer tourists, especially repeat participants, construct themselves as transnational contributors to, and sometimes even members of, the local community. They feel strongly invested and connected to the community and have a sense of pride in, even ownership of, its successes, but not its failures.

Poverty tours similarly serve a moralizing purpose for American youths. Mission participants feel a sort-of "white man's burden," in which they are obligated or called by God to intervene to improve the economic and social conditions of the community. Adult missionaries and organizers highlight the ways that local people have failed to provide for themselves, portraying them as backwards or irrational. For instance, a house made of wood and tin that features a huge satellite dish is ridiculed by the Americans as evidence of a "culture of poverty," in keeping with the widely criticized theory that poor people create and perpetuate their socioeconomic situations through bad choices and behaviors. The owners of the house are criticized for spending what little money they have on luxury items rather than more suitable housing. These types of narratives construct a sense of cultural superiority that draws on images from the US, such as the mythical "welfare queen," a derogatory and racist term for women who allegedly abuse the welfare system while consuming luxury goods. Although there is no implication that the owner of the satellite disk obtained it fraudulently, these comments are meant to cast shame on irresponsible spending behavior and to serve as a warning to American youths to be

fiscally responsible as well as moral consumers. After passing the shack with the satellite, Jason comments to the group,

> Dominicans will get $800 and they won't save it or buy food. They'll go and buy an $800 TV, and I'm thinking, "You don't need an $800 TV when your children don't have food in their bellies." And then they'll need food or something else, so they'll turn around and sell that TV for $200. Well, that's $600 they just lost. And they do this again and again.

Jason often tells another story of the García family, who are prominent members at the mission's church. Silvestre, a single father with three daughters had bad credit, so he asked his oldest daughter, Teresa, to borrow $300 from loan sharks to pay off his medical debt from a work injury. As Jason tells the story, Teresa was scraping by to pay off just the interest every month with her salary and, in the meantime, Silvestre received about $5,000 in severance pay.

> And do you think that he gave some money to his daughter to pay off the loan that she had taken out for him? What do you think? Nooooo. He spent it all. Every penny, like that. Got like new doors for the home and something. And now that's the difference. Poor Dominicans, it's something in their culture, they can never break that cycle. As soon as they have the money, they spend it. A person like you or me would have paid off that loan and then saved that money. But no, he spent all that money, every penny.

Jason's examples serve as a moralistic narrative concerning economic behaviors. Missionaries often describe Dominicans as lazy and unorganized, relying on similar discourses popular in modernization theories. According to Jason, Americans are more efficient and effective at getting work done, constructing Dominicans as out of synch with the modern efficiency and hard work of the Americans.

> It's really frustrating trying to get things done, because down here it's a whole different pace. It's Dominican time, and when I'm around it I catch it too a bit. But you know when the short-term teams come down, they

> bring a lot of energy, they're here for a week and they want to get their project done and when they work alongside the Dominican people, they can show them how to get it done and be efficient.

Another missionary, Carlos, believes that cultural traits are immutable and God-given: "I feel that God gives gifts to all cultures. Strengths and weaknesses. And their weakness is that they are unorganized." These discourses portray poverty as an individual failing, in this case a cultural failing that can be contagious, rather than the result of structural inequality, including neoliberal development in the tourism industry (Gregory 2007) and exploitative labor practices in the sugar industry. Jason explains how he has tried to teach Dominicans the "7 baby steps" of finance set out by Dave Ramsey, a popular American personal-finance expert who was commonly cited by the evangelicals in my study. This is an individual-level example of what Keane characterizes as the moral narrative of modernity, or the move toward autonomy and freedom (Keane 2007, 6) promoted by missionaries.

In contrast to these rather ethnocentric examples from Jason and Carlos are examples of other STM leaders using the encounter with poverty as a moment for empathy and self-reflection. For example, Raya, an adult group leader, prepares a group of youths for their first visit to the bateyes, telling them that what they will see may at first seem strange to them. She then asks them to imagine that John Rockefeller was going to visit their own houses, explaining that the youths' homes, their furniture, and their food might seem poor to someone like John Rockefeller, but, to the youths, it is just their normal life and nothing to be ashamed of. Referring again to the bateyes, Raya continues, "These are people's homes and lives, and although they may seem a shock to

us, they are just normal to them. They may even be proud of their homes." Instead of emphasizing Haitian-Dominicans' lifeways as strange, Raya attempts to put forward a relativistic perspective on wealth and culture that normalizes difference. However, Raya's attempt to create similarity between the groups highlights difference while failing to fully account for that difference.

As Lila Abu-Lughod (1991, 145) argues, the concepts of culture and relativism are tools often used to distinguish and justify hierarchical differences in relations of power. Similarly, Cathy Small (2011) expands on the role of cultural relativism in reinforcing hierarchies, arguing that relativism has capacity for patronization over the Other. As much as they might try to emulate the experiences of the poor and to understand them from a relativistic perspective, the American team members are only poor in comparison to John Rockefeller, not poor like the people with whom they have come to work. This version of cultural relativism is simplistic; it only calls upon the youths to be empathetic and respectful, not to engage with larger issues that might influence their lives. In a devotional later that morning, Raya acknowledges the class disparities between the groups, stating, "The Bible says the poor will always be among us. But we are the anomaly. We think we are the standard, but we are not." Raya highlights their class privilege and also inverts their perspective on what is normal, thus taking an approach akin to the classic anthropological one of making the strange familiar and the familiar strange. The poverty that they will see in the Dominican Republic is not atypical; rather, they and the relative wealth that they represent are the global abnormality. However, no other context is provided, and they are not encouraged to

question why their station of privilege is abnormal or how American wealth and power came to be. Instead, they are encouraged to be introspective in specific ways about their relationship to wealth.

Valorization of Poverty

STM moral discourses often construct a dichotomous relationship between materiality and spirituality in which poverty is valorized as a life condition that is thought to facilitate the pursuit of a more moral or spiritual life. This construction is rooted in religious discourses pertaining to wealth, poverty, and morality. By valorizing poverty, Americans highlight aspects of Dominican life that are the result of poverty, while simultaneously ignoring the conditions of poverty that have made such a lifestyle necessary.

A key component of the valorization of poverty is the projection of emotions and motivations. Americans frequently comment that Dominicans—despite their suffering—are some of the happiest people they have ever met. They frequently remark on how, despite their lack of wealth, Dominicans and Haitian-Dominicans willingly share what little they have with others. Writing on her team's attendance at a local worship service, Isabella comments,

> For many, this is the first time that they have come in contact with true poverty. The sight is depressing. Yet despite this, the people are very cheerful, they worship the Lord with numerous joyful hymns and listen intently during the readings and the lessons. Although they have very little money, they do contribute to the cost of the church. It is a clear reminder of the Widow's mite story.[10]

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[10]Mark 12:41–44: [41] Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts.

Americans intend such comments as praise and mean for them to evoke admiration of local people's perceived ability to be happy and generous in the face of poverty and oppression. However, comments like these reflect tropes of the noble savage in literature, film, and early works of anthropology. The comments romanticize Dominicans as idealized Others who are uncorrupted by the materialist trappings of capitalism, happy and giving freely despite living in poverty. In producing these discursive constructions, Americans are simultaneously highly aware and willfully ignorant of how the conditions of capitalism create such poverty. For instance, several Americans describe visiting the bateyes as "like a dream" or not part of reality. Even when they come face to face with batey life, it is still difficult to believe that it exists. Americans see the Dominican Republic as both untouched and fallen. In some ways, their remarks reproduce the imperialist nostalgia identified by Rosaldo (1993) that signals a yearning for a lost Eden, or an imagined, untouched civilization as it existed before being repressed or otherwise destroyed by colonialism. This imagery essentializes local peoples. The paradox of this imperialist nostalgia is that it erases colonial and postcolonial agents from the wider context that created these conditions.

Dominican participants also discursively construct a relationship between materiality and spirituality. For example, Yunior, a 20-year-old Dominican man who

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[42] But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.
[43] Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. [44] They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."

regularly attends the ABC church, volunteered to travel with the Hope group and assist at the medical clinic in the batey. Yunior is familiar with poverty; at the time, he was recently unemployed, and he had received multiple forms of STM assistance throughout his childhood, including uniforms from the Making a Difference team. During a brief period of downtime, Yunior called me over to talk. His face was downcast, visibly different from that of the young man who would typically exude a *tiguere* or streetwise persona, a survival mechanism that he had developed while growing up in a rough neighborhood and being the recurring target of violent gang beatings as a child, after he was a witness to a crime.

> En [el pueblo], siempre decimos, "necesito esto o esto para sentirme bien con mi vida," pero nadie allá tiene la alegría o el amor por Dios como aquí. Aquí no tienen casi nada, pero están contentos y no se quejan como en [el pueblo] de que no tenemos suficiente o queremos más. Aquí tienen un gran amor por Dios. Es muy triste ver lo poco que tienen. Y nosotros en [el pueblo] no estamos tan lejos de ellos, al final de la calle.
>
> [In town we] always say, "I need this or that for me to feel good about my life," but that none of them in [town] have the joy or love for God like the people do here [in this batey]. Here they don't have hardly anything, but they are happy and not complaining like in [town] that we don't have enough or we want more. Here they have such a love for God. It is very sad to see how little that they have. And we [in town] are not that far from them, just down the road.

In his conversation with me, Yunior expresses sentiments that are typically expressed by Americans. His statement reflects ideas and understandings that Yunior apparently shares with the American teams, particularly the idea that poverty is a virtue.

Poverty is valorized indirectly. Many Americans say, for example, that Dominican life is admirable because of its simplicity; this is based in an ethnocentric understanding of foreign and rural societies as less complex or advanced than those in

"developed" areas. The lack of material or modern goods become falsely associated with lack of advanced thoughts or complex problems. Such comments align with this chapter's earlier discussion of tourism, especially ethical tourism, as an escape from the modern world. Hannah, a high-school senior, explained to me in an interview, "The life here is just so simple. I have always been a fan of living simply. They have mastered living simply. It's really inspirational." Comments such as Hannah's frame poverty as a testament to one's resolve and even an admirable lifestyle choice; some compare it to living in a "tiny home," which is considered an environmentally conscious effort to curtail consumerism. Americans are aware that the simplicity that they witness is a result of poverty; however, statements like these, which conceptualize a lack of possessions or a stressful job as a choice, erase the lack of resources or unemployment faced by those who are living in poverty and merely trying to survive.

Hannah and other Americans are not inspired by the "simplicity" of Dominican life on its own supposed merits. Their views on poverty and a simple life are shaped by religious beliefs regarding wealth, morality, and spirituality. According to American STM participants, poverty can keep one away from the trappings of materialism and greed that are brought about by money. The verse "For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10) is highly influential among evangelical Americans, and it figures prominently in their discursive constructions of money as a cause of evil and unhappiness. Jeff, a parent on Hannah's trip, praised what he saw as Dominican happiness and compared it to Americans. "[The Dominicans] show nothing but love and respect, even the adults. And they're happy. Even without us being here, they're happy.

And you have kids in the US with money who aren't that happy." Dominicans greet American tourists with smiles, talk vivaciously about God, and passionately sing and dance during worship services. The happy local is a stereotype commonly encountered in regard to tourist-oriented Caribbean countries. According to the folk theories that are voiced among tourists at the resorts, tourism is lucrative for local people, as evidenced by the fact that the service workers are always smiling and happy. Such notions are rooted in racist caricatures of workers of color as perpetually smiling, happy-go-lucky, and eager to serve. Jason often introduces the García sisters to STM teams as "the smiley sisters," claiming that the name was bestowed upon them by a former group because they were always smiling. After this introduction, Jason usually explains to Americans that, although the García sisters are among the happiest people he knows, they come from a tragic home life—a mother who abandoned them when the oldest, Teresa, was five, leaving Teresa largely responsible for raising her younger sisters while their single father supported them all on his meager pay from the local sugar mill. Such narratives as these exemplify a modern Protestant ideology in which happiness or spirituality results from a denial (willing or otherwise) of materiality (Keane 2007). According to Hannah,

> The people are happy here. They are just so happy here. You know, I know people in the US with three-million-dollar houses, and they are not happy, but all of these people are. You know? It will make me think when I go back home, you know I sometimes feel like I don't have enough, but I try not to [feel that way] and to always be grateful because there are a lot of people who don't realize that you have water and a house, and you're lucky. Because so many people don't have that. I think people just need what they need. I mean I like to have cool stuff sometimes, but you really just need what you need.

Team members believe that poverty frees one to be happy. By speculating about Dominicans' happiness while living in poverty, Americans learn how to worry only about the necessities, to curtail their desires, and to focus on the basics that make them happy and better people. According to Howell (2012), the imaginings of poverty as simultaneously a spiritual blessing and a physical curse came to be subconsciously understood as part of an exchange through which Americans' sacrifices during STMs would result in their receiving spiritual insights and blessings from those whom they served. In this way, poverty "is both a curse against which God and his people align themselves and a moment in which God can reveal himself in ways hidden in the comfortable worlds of wealth" (Howell 2012, 179).

Many evangelicals believe that the privileges of their relative wealth can be detrimental to their spiritual life. This belief is rooted in another Bible verse that is commonly encountered during STMs, Matthew 19:24: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." Similarly, in Luke 6:20, Jesus declares, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."[11] STM participants are motivated to participate and to serve in STMs. They gain insights into living a life not centered around materialism and also atone for their consumerist behaviors back home by turning away from spending money on material possessions for themselves, using it instead to meet basic needs for the poor.

[11]Significantly, the verse cited here from the Book of Luke is altered in the Book of Matthew, which states "blessed be the poor in spirit." According to some Bible scholars, the phrase "poor in spirit" signifies poverty as both a physical and spiritual condition.

Disrupting reliance on wealth and material possessions is often a personal goal and an achieved outcome for STM participants.

According to STM discourses, poverty can lead to more than just virtuousness; it can also cultivate spirituality. In the context of STMs, the economic ability to provide aid is misrecognized as a form of spiritual capital. The moral discourses of STM encounters construct local recipients of STM aid as having their own forms of spiritual capital that are tied to their lower economic class, as expressed in such sayings as "poor but rich in spirit" and "blessed are the poor." According to college student Cameron, "We are rich in possession and them in relationships. And I envy that. We have things and we get together, but their community is full of love and faith." Similarly, recent college graduate Dwayne explains how "[Dominicans] might have nothing but a smile on their face. No matter how little they think they have, they have joy, and they don't know what they don't have. They have the Lord and they know that." Americans believe that Dominicans' poverty is sanctified and predisposes them to be less materialistic, which fosters spirituality. This belief is held simultaneously, and without perceived contradiction with, the belief that Dominicans' poverty is the result of irrational economic behaviors, which are construed as immoral. In one devotional on privilege, youth-minister-in-training Chase makes a distinction between blessedness and righteousness. He asks a group of youths,

> What is blessedness? What does it mean to be blessed? It's an abstract term that is thrown around a lot, even in the secular word and social media like celebs with a new car "#blessed," which leaks to Christian churches. Don't hashtag it, but we say, "I'm blessed." But there are different versions of blessed. What does it mean to be biblically blessed? Pure in heart and very happy is the person who does righteousness.

In another reflection, a different participant writes:

> But the Dominican people are blessed in so many other ways. God has blessed them with family and friends, and they value these relationships dearly – investing a lot of time in one another. I also believe that - because of their daily needs and struggles - many are forced to rely on God to a much greater degree. As a result, I think they have a tendency to walk with God on a more regular basis and have a deeper relationship with Him than many of us do. They hunger and thirst for Him, feeding on His faithfulness… and trusting that He'll meet their daily needs.

Constructing their own privileges as a state of being "blessed" erases the ways in which Americans have benefitted from the same system that simultaneously oppresses and impoverishes Dominicans. For some evangelicals, material wealth is a blessing from God, while, at the same time, Dominicans are spiritually blessed because they are closer to God as a result of their material poverty. Chase draws on popular social-media discourses to appeal to youths to reconsider their morality. He makes the case that their own material wealth and economic privilege are blessings, but that these blessings can also be made righteous through using these privileges to benefit others; by participating in this STM and providing economic and spiritual outreach, participants can accrue moral and spiritual capital. This exemplifies Bourdieu's misrecognition: the material capital that enables Americans to "do righteousness" on an STM is obfuscated, as a spiritual blessing. Americans' positions on Dominicans' spiritual capital reflects Bourdieu's (1977, 6) concept of willful misrecognition, or "the collectively maintained and approved self-deception without which symbolic exchange…could not operate." In this theoretical formulation, symbolic capital derives its power from the naturalization of dominant arbitrary forms and systems of meaning that are imposed on the social order in order to

maintain social cohesion. Unlike the Americans' performance of moral acts, which obscures their economic privilege and is misrecognized as spiritual capital, Dominicans' lack of material capital or, more precisely, their lack of economic privilege, is hyper-recognized. Poor Dominicans are endowed with spiritual capital by Americans. However, Dominicans are thus moral and blessed not by virtue of any moral deeds that they perform, but by virtue of their simply being poor. Americans, in contrast, are constructed as moral agents who perform moral deeds.

Moral Sacrifice

For Americans, STMs socialize moral subjectivity through proximity to poverty, participation in local life, and performance of moral behavior. Participation in an STM also involves temporarily sacrificing their privileges, perhaps even simulating an imagined Dominican life. In many cases, STM participants depart from traditional tourist practices by staying at housing run by the overseeing mission organization, as was the case for the majority[12] of the ABC and DRM teams with which I worked. These lodgings lack some of the basic amenities of a hotel. Teams spend the duration of the mission sleeping in communal dorms on threadbare bunk beds in accommodations that lack air conditioning, hot water, and consistent electricity. They spend their days hot and sweating, performing manual labor in the sun and using an outhouse or relieving themselves in the fields. A frequently asked question among American participants throughout the course of the

[12] Due to great variation across STMs, this is not always the case. Many of the doctors on medical missions wanted to be well rested, and therefore stayed in DRM's villas on the resort owned by Azúcar Central that were described in Chapter 2. Hotel stays are common in other mission organizations' STMs.

STM is what they miss the most, or what they plan to do when they get back. The most frequent responses, given jokingly but quite sincere, are hot showers and air conditioning. Just as frequently, though, Americans remark on what they learned from the temporary sacrifice of doing without these things. The cold shower is interpreted as a blessing after a day of backbreaking work under the Caribbean sun. When the water pressure is low and they have to scoop their shower out of a utility bucket, it is a moment to reflect on how much water they waste in their showers back home.

Poor Wi-Fi connectivity and consequent inability to remain in contact with friends and family back home create opportunities for STM teams to bond through formal activities such as daily devotionals, as well as informal ones such as playing card games and talking into the late hours of the night about their shared experiences. Some team leaders even enforce rules regarding phone and social-media usage during the trip in an effort to focus participants' minds on the spiritual and emotional aspects of the face-to-face encounter. Staying in the mission compound rather than a hotel is an opportunity to create connections with local people and to experience local culture. Usually, a few local youths, such as hired interpreters and family members of local employees of the mission, hang around the mission compound and bond with the team members as well. Meals typically alternate between American and Dominican dishes, the latter of which turn off the pickier eaters, who may opt to eat plain white rice or make a peanut-butter sandwich instead. More rarely, ABC and DRM missions involve homestays, which present opportunities for participants to live with Dominican families in their homes.

In these and other such ways, the STM is more than simply an encounter with Dominican poverty, it is also a participatory mimetic experience. This can also be seen in the manual tasks that are performed as part of the STM's work project, usually construction of homes or church buildings. Many of the American adult volunteers have white-collar jobs that do not require manual labor; youths especially have little to no experience with even the most basic construction work. Yet, getting their hands dirty by digging wells or building sustainable gardens is important to completing the mission in that it represents a way to serve God authentically, through physical actions rather than by donating wealth. Through these acts of service, participants claim to find meaning, which may range from finding a sense of purpose to forming new ontological orientations toward the world.

The Americans play multiple roles in this spectacle, and local people observe their performance. Jason believes that local people are inspired by and learn from the hard work put in by the Americans, who have humbled themselves by rejecting privilege in order to experience Dominican life. According to Cristina, a young Haitian-Dominican woman, local people are always astonished to see Americans doing work rather than paying someone else to do it. As discussed in Chapter 2, Americans' labor is costly and their work is of lesser quality than the work that would result if they invested money directly into the community by hiring community members. However, Cristina feels a greater connection to the American teams because she sees the effort that they put in—living alongside local people, sweating, and working hard. For Dominicans, this spectacle

provides a view of Americans much different from the more familiar view of traditional tourists living in luxury at resorts.

For volunteer tourists, the STM is more than just seeing Dominican ways of life; it is also participating in local ways of life, a means for the body to become a surface on which moral subjectivity is inscribed. As religiously inspired and affiliated enterprises, STMs embed religious discourses into these activities that are not present in other forms of volunteer tourism. STMs reflect and reproduce a Christian theology that emphasizes service and sacrifice. STMs provide an opportunity for becoming Christ-like by emulating the material sacrifices that were made by Christ, whose suffering ultimately brought about salvation. Through their service and living alongside local people, Americans hope to experience a more authentic missionary life than would otherwise be possible for them. This mimetic embodiment of local life involves forms of habituation through which participants come to be (re)formed as individual moral subjects (Bialecki 2008; Mahmood 2005). Such practices follow what Mahmood describes as an Aristotelian model of ethical pedagogy in which "performative acts (like prayer) are understood to create corresponding inward dispositions" (2005, 135). Temporarily living without American amenities, working alongside the poor, and blessing them with gifts or medical treatment allows STM participants to emulate a more "moral" life, or even to live in a more Christ-like manner. As Kathy writes in her journal, "Mother Teresa once remarked that Christ comes to us today in disguise: in the person of the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger dressed in rags, the homeless, and the prisoner. There is another person to add to the list: the Haitian sugarcane cutter in the Dominican Republic." Here, the poor are

blessed and, for that reason, they present a way for Americans to strengthen their connection to Christ. Through proximity, performance, and participation in impoverished local ways of life, STMs socialize moral subjectivity.

Testimonies of Hardship

The exchange of testimonies, another common STM practice, is a matter of seeking similarity and unity across cultural and economic difference. Among Christians, a testimony is a narrative shared with others that tells the story of how one decided to become a Christian, how God transformed one's life, or how one's religious faith was strengthened. Through an interpreter, Americans and Dominicans share their testimonies with one another. Before Teresa shared her own testimony, she told her mixed audience, "Our testimony is important for God and others, as well as all of the world. Our actions show what we are." Teresa underscores the importance of testimonies as a tool for evangelism and conversion. Testimonies take the form of narratives, which index local social structures and are constitutive of the social and moral subjectivities of a community's members. Teresa's statement that "our actions show what we are" is a call to her audience—to her Dominican peers to resist stereotypes and prove their worth through moral behaviors, and to the Americans to recognize her moral behaviors and not just her poverty. Dominicans' testimonies are powerful moral lessons for Americans in that they show how one can remain faithful despite the hardships that one suffers. In her research on oral narratives in a pilgrimage town in India, Prasad (2006, 3) demonstrates how narratives were an opportunity for a shared negotiation of moral being that encoded community, place, and history. Similarly, Dominicans' testimonies, shared during the

cross-cultural encounters that characterize STMs, humanize Dominicans and the Dominican Republic and challenge Americans' preconceived assumptions about them.

Americans' testimonies likewise challenge Dominicans' expectations of Americans. Jason likes to have American teams share their testimonies because it shows that many of life's struggles are universal, regardless of nationality or class status. American testimonies are often like Dominican testimonies in that both address themes of money, health, and death. Cristina shared with me how she feels more connected to Americans as fellow Christians and gains an empathetic outlook on their lives as not very different from her own. Kaitlyn, for example, shared her testimony of growing up in a wealthy family. She explained that, because of their wealth, they did not know Christ and so the family broke apart. Her father abandoned them. She realized that money is nothing without Christ, so she made the decision to convert and, through Christ, she forgave her father and brought both of her parents to Christ as well. Kaitlyn's testimony is a powerful reminder to Dominicans that their problems will not be solved by wealth alone; they must find Christ. On another occasion, Tom gave his testimony to some youths who were heckling the team as they surveyed a poor neighborhood. Tom told them that he did not find Jesus until he was 35 years old and that they still had time to be saved. He went on to tell of his seven-year-old daughter in the hospital, dying from appendicitis. Someone came to pray. Tom described how, in that moment, he heard God, so he prayed and heard the Gospels. He explained that he was presented with a choice in that moment, and he decided to follow God. Some of the Dominicans were visibly moved, gasping as the story was translated to them. Testimonies such as Tom's defy Dominicans' expectations of the

American Other as privileged and without troubles. They serve as a powerful reminder of the Christian belief that all are equal before God and that they can only be saved through moral service to Christ.

Conclusion

Through witnessing poverty firsthand, Americans hope to broaden their awareness of what it means to live in poverty and to learn how to become more virtuous Christians. This process of moral-subject formation emerges from their attempts to live vicariously in poverty, through such acts as sacrificing amenities and performing hard labor as well as through efforts to alleviate poverty, such as engaging in charitable and evangelical acts and providing material and spiritual goods to those in need (matters that will be considered more closely later in this dissertation).

At the end of the work project, STMs typically culminate with trips to more traditional tourist sites and activities, including to a beach or on a mini-cruise, as a reward for their hard work. As much as STM participants try to distinguish themselves as different, from other tourists as well as from other STM-goers, their participation in STMs and other forms of volunteer-tourism remains entrenched in a neoliberalized tourism industry that ultimately restructures local life.

Before departure, STM veterans warn novices that what they will witness during the STM will change them forever, and in ways of which they might not immediately be aware. Pre-departure activities in the US are typically limited to raising funds for the trip and gathering whatever supplies are needed, such as medicine and goods to be handed out. These supplies are collected between trips, sometimes throughout the year.

Information disseminated to participants usually concerns practical matters such as what participants should expect in terms of types of work that they will be doing, the climate, and clothes that they should pack. Little time, if any, is spent learning about the history or culture of the Dominican Republic, nor is there discussion about the lives of the people whom they will meet. According to Howell (2012, 142), during his pre-departure orientation, the team leader described the Dominican Republic as "'a country known more for baseball players than having a culture,' where we would work with 'some of the poorest people the world has ever known' in a 'completely undeveloped country.'" Howell claims that although this "hyperbole was unusual…his associating poverty with a lack of Dominican culture was not." In her discussion on language socialization and morality, Fader (2011, 324) states that unlike research on language socialization, the study of local morality "has less often been embedded in broader sociohistorical processes such as immigration, colonialism, and religious and political movements. This means that morality has been conceptualized as adult cultural norms for behavior without necessarily locating those norms in changing sociohistorical contexts." By failing to educate participants about local culture and the country's social and economic circumstances, STM leaders do a great disservice to both American and Dominican participants. American participants are ignorant of the causes of Dominican poverty and are therefore ill equipped to try to address them more effectively or to make changes in their own lives that could help alleviate those conditions. As Robbins (2004, 316) argues, "to make a moral choice, there must be some consciousness of the issues involved." American STM participants remain mostly uninformed, even after multiple STMs.

As the STM experience is both short in duration and decontextualized from global processes, and thus gives American participants little if any understanding of their own complicit role in perpetuating the poverty that they see, STMs may be less transformative than they purport to be. American participants describe the changes that they will make in their lives when they return home—they talk about being more grateful, curtailing consumption, and being less wasteful—but these changes are typically short-lived. Moreover, these changes typically have little or no effect on Dominicans' lives or even on poverty in the US. While in the Dominican Republic, Americans talk about, and even actively support, such causes as universal healthcare, labor unions, a fair minimum wage, anti-racism, and paths to citizenship for undocumented immigrants in the Dominican context. However, these views are not aligned or connected with their positions on poverty, healthcare, labor, racism, and citizenship in the US. Indeed, most team members are opposed to the implementation of such programs in the US. Ultimately, this reveals a paradox of philanthropy and charity: charity is made possible by policies that are a root cause of economic inequality and social injustice.

Chapter 4

Short-Term Missions as Racial(izing) Encounters

A Tale of Two Black Lives

One evening during my first stint of preliminary fieldwork, in August 2013, the American members of the Making a Difference mission team were talking after dinner with Jason, the head missionary at ABC. The team asked Jason about one of his star disciples, Reinaldo, whom the first-timers on the mission team had met earlier that day, when he helped them purchase school uniforms and supplies for hundreds of children who regularly attend the services at ABC's churches. Jason described how Reinaldo, a Haitian-Dominican man, then 26 years old, had grown up attending ABC's flagship church. Jason boasted that Reinaldo now led the music for the church's worship services and was also employed by ABC to interpret and otherwise assist the mission teams. Jason told them that, although Reinaldo had come from a poor background, he was a talented musician and, with help from the mission, he had released several albums and had become a national-award-winning Christian-rap artist; he would later gain wider prominence, touring Central America in 2016.

At the time, despite his musical success, Reinaldo was living under threat of deportation because he was undocumented. Born in the Dominican Republic to a Haitian mother, the Dominican Republic's *jus sanguinis* (right of blood) citizenship policy barred

him from attaining citizenship, even though his father was a Dominican citizen. In the Dominican Republic, as is the case in many countries with *jus sanguinis* policies, citizenship is conferred based on maternity, since paternity can only be verified through a DNA test. Although some NGOs and religious organizations, funds these tests and provides legal assistance (which would otherwise be financially out of reach for most Haitian-Dominicans) on a *pro bono* basis, this option was not possible for Reinaldo; his father had passed away when he was young, so he had no way to prove his right to citizenship. In his daily life, physical attributes such as his dark skin made Reinaldo an easy target for everyday discrimination. Reinaldo's undocumented status also prevented him from attending university and from seeking work in the formal economy, outside of ABC. Reinaldo tried to keep the details of his heritage and legal status a secret, but Jason frequently outed Reinaldo to the visiting mission teams as a way to educate them on the discrimination faced by Haitians through personal narrative.

After describing Reinaldo's background and the basics of the situation for Haitian-Dominicans at the time, Jason launched into Reinaldo's religious "testimony," a kind of personal narrative, normally told in the first person,[13] describing how one overcame an obstacle through reliance on Christ. The narrator frames the events described as the impetus to make the decision to commit his or her life to Jesus, commonly through baptism:

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[13] Testimonies are generally conceived of as personal narratives, meant to be told and shared in the first person. I witnessed American missionaries or teams reproducing Dominicans' testimonies, but never the converse. This disparity is due in part to language barriers. Reinaldo, however, is fluent in English and works closely with the Americans. He kept his undocumented status private, choosing to share it only with those whom he had known for years.

> You know, when you first see him, you know, he keeps up this image as a rapper, it's his look, but he is a really good Christian. I know his heart. *(Jason picks up a Bible sitting next to him and holds it up.)* In his testimony, Reinaldo always says that the Bible saved him in two ways—his soul, which is made eternal through Christ Jesus, but also his life. He was out late one night after a concert on that motorcycle of his trying to get home, and the police pulled him over. And Reinaldo could tell that he was in trouble. Not that he had done anything wrong, but there's a lot of corruption in the police force here and a lot of discrimination against Haitians. And there he was, dark skin, a young man on his motorcycle, out late at night, and dressed like a rapper—because he is one!—you know with the fancy sneakers and ripped jeans with the backwards hat [Jason gestures to the relevant body parts for each component of dress], so, in his mind, they were going to rough him up because they think he's a drug dealer or just up to no good because he's out late and he's Haitian. And since it's late, there's nobody around to witness anything. It happens all the time. All the time. So, they yell at him, "What are you doing out so late?" and he says, "I'm a Christian rapper, I'm coming home from a concert." And they didn't believe him, and he says, "No really, I am. Look, I'll show you," and pulls out his Bible. And you know they were surprised, probably didn't think this kid would have a Bible unless he really was a Christian, so they left him alone...And Reinaldo really believes that God saved him that night, he didn't know what was going to happen, but he just had this feeling, he says he could see it, that they were going to beat him and leave him for dead.

After Jason recounted this powerful narrative, the team sat stunned by the injustice of this instance of racial profiling. They speculated about the constant fear that Reinaldo must face in his daily life and expressed thanks for the grace of God, who they believed had guided Reinaldo to carry his Bible with him that night and had moved the police officers to desist. Soon, though, this passionate conversation gradually began to connect Jason's telling of Reinaldo's testimony to a similar story that was dominating headlines in the US at the time: the 2012 death of Trayvon Martin, an African-American teenage male who was followed and killed by George Zimmerman, an unofficial neighborhood-watch patrol, while Martin was walking through his father's gated

neighborhood late one night. The incident later became a catalyst for the international Black Lives Matter movement against systemic racism and racist violence. This narrative event in the Dominican Republic occurred just one month after the jury in George Zimmerman's trial had rendered its controversial verdict: not guilty. Discussion of this new, related topic came up almost seamlessly, first in private conversations between neighbors in the room and then in the group as a whole:

> Well, what was he doing out there late at night walking around?
> And with his hood up?
> He was up to no good.
> He shouldn't have tried to run or fight.

Their short remarks indicate that the team members were trying to be cautious in their discussion, as this was a politically charged and controversial issue centered on race. By the end of the discussion, the team came to the consensus that Trayvon Martin, regardless of what he was doing out at night, was at fault because, from their perspective, he should not have been walking around late at night, or he should not have fled from, or started an altercation with, Zimmerman, who had pursued him. The discussion then transitioned to the topic of Black crime in the US in general, which, the team felt, was a far more prevalent threat that represented what they termed "the real racism" in the US. According to team members, the "real" threat to Black Americans was Black-on-Black violent crime. Further, they felt that it was not Trayvon Martin's death that deserved national media attention, but rather Black-on-white violent crime, such as the case, in a county close to Trayvon Martin's home, of three Black youths who had beaten a white person on a bus.

Although there was no explicit acknowledgment of the parallels between the incident recounted in Reinaldo's story and the murder of Trayvon Martin, the organic flow of the team's conversation between the two indicates that they at least subconsciously recognized the stories' similarities, despite ultimately expressing very different reactions to them. In Reinaldo's story, the group could easily recognize state violence and racial profiling, albeit without explicitly naming them. In the Trayvon Martin story, even when it was juxtaposed with Reinaldo's story, they recognized no racism or implicit bias, laying blame instead on the time of night when Martin was out and his dress—both elements that they also could have used to condemn Reinaldo, had their relationship to him been different. Their discussion reflects Cole's (2012) White Savior Industrial Complex, in which "[t]he white savior supports brutal policies in the morning, founds charities in the afternoon, and receives awards in the evening." Politicized ideologies of race, instilled through countless media representations and institutionalized through laws, are not easily challenged (much less disrupted or refuted). As this and other examples described in this chapter will suggest, STM participants recognize that racism and race-based injustice are part of everyday reality in the Dominican Republic, but ultimately, mostly fail to recognize similar forms of racism back home in the US.

As I explained in earlier chapters, STMs are marketed to their American participants as life-changing experiences (Howell 2012; Howell and Dorr 2007). I described how leaders, participants, and marketing materials repeatedly laud STMs for introducing their mostly young participants to other cultures and ways of life. Participants

describe STMs as eye-opening experiences that challenge them to reflect on their own class positions and to make changes to their lives when they return home, such as curtailing their consumption. In Chapter 3, I focused on the ways that participation in STMs can change how participants see the world, particularly in terms of their awareness of poverty and inequality. I also proposed, however, that because STMs are short in duration and are decontextualized from the large-scale processes that make them possible, participants do not achieve understanding of class relations or of their own role, as global-level consumers, in the poverty that they see. Ultimately, STMs are more an apparatus for socializing and reproducing religious beliefs and late-capitalist values than for radically transforming worldviews or providing solutions to poverty.

In this chapter, I build on this argument to examine the racialized politics of STM encounters. I consider how STMs may influence the ways in which American participants think about race by creating encounters in which American participants, almost exclusively white, come face to face with racially diverse others. Yet, the racial differences in the encounter are rarely discussed, despite the fact that STMs rely heavily on ideas about race as their motivation. In his ethnographic account of an STM in the Dominican Republic, Howell (2012, 199) notes, "I was struck by the ways we did not address race." Similarly, during my fieldwork, outside of the missionary's (re)telling of Reinaldo's testimony, race and racism were never directly discussed and, when mentioned, were not explicitly named as such, much less critically examined or contextualized in regard to racism in the US and global issues such as the enduring effects of the transatlantic slave trade. Consequently, despite coming face to face and

empathizing with racial others in a foreign land, participants maintained and even reaffirmed their adherence to the established racial paradigms of their home country.

The vignette that opens this chapter illustrates how narratives, particularly those produced by the white American missionary about racial others, are an important means by which the American team learns about racial discrimination in the Dominican Republic and how this discrimination exacerbates immigrants' and Haitian-Dominicans' precarious social position. The narratives recounted by the missionary resonated on a more personal level for the visiting team than stories about anonymous immigrants and Black youths back home because the team had witnessed Dominican poverty firsthand and had met and befriended the subjects of the narratives, whom they recognized and accepted as fellow Christians due to their association with the mission. Equipped with some basic knowledge about the status of Haitians in the country from previous conversations with the missionary, the team was able to identify racial profiling in a context that is literally foreign to them. However, their new and still developing understanding of race in the Dominican Republic had not been expanded to other contexts of racial discrimination, namely those in their own country. Back home, they had likely already formed hegemonic opinions about race and race-based discrimination and had not had the kinds of experiences of racial encounter that are offered by STMs.

In the remainder of this chapter, I examine STMs as an encounter that is constituted by ideas about race that are discussed in coded language that emphasizes culture and nationality rather than race. STMs implicitly promote racial equality and harmony between Americans and Dominicans. Many American STM participants come

into the STM with racial stereotypes that motivate a commodification of Blackness in their encounters with Dominicans, especially Haitian-Dominicans. During STMs, race is discursively exoticized by the American missionaries and participants to create a religious and spiritual capital that reproduces the white-savior trope whereby the white American team is represented as learning deeper truths about themselves while saving racialized others.

Ultimately, this encounter with Blackness is not egalitarian, and it relies on paradoxical notions of anti-racism. American participants may learn something about racism in the Dominican Republic, but it stops there; rarely is it taken up and applied to more familiar contexts, such as race relations in the US. This runs counter to the narratives of life-changing experiences that are promoted by STM participants after they return to the US, and it may actually reinforce Americans' previously formed understandings of race and racism in their own country, such as the idea that racism is an individual-level problem in the US and that institutionalized racism exists only in other, backwards countries.

By providing a brief overview of contemporary forms of racism and other race-related issues in the Dominican Republic, I hope to contextualize the current status of Haitians in the country, with attention to issues of religious beliefs, immigration, and the exploitation of labor. STMs function as racializing encounters, from the racial demographics of the American participants to the structure of the tourist encounter, which is inspired by and reproduces a white gaze. For many young American STM participants, their time in the Dominican Republic is one of few encounters that they have

ever had with persons of another race, and their experiences of these encounters are shaped, at least in part, by racial stereotypes that are prevalent in the US. As Emerson and Smith (2000) found, white evangelicals do not have much experience with such encounters. The rest of the chapter examines the use of narratives that highlight Blackness, such as Jason's telling of Reinaldo's testimony, as they are told not by the subjects of the narrative, but by the white American missionaries.

Although they are intended to be egalitarian, even cultural-relativistic, encounters through which American participants learn about cultural differences and about how race and class shape others' experiences, STMs tend to reproduce ethnocentric perspectives and racist stereotypes. The latter are often commodified as a way to raise money for the mission—money that may never reach the Dominicans for whom, ostensibly, it was intended. The commodified Haitian-Dominican Christian stereotype in particular is used to accumulate spiritual capital for American missionaries. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the apparent disconnect between Americans' perceptions and actions relating to race in the Dominican Republic and in the United States.

Two Nations, One Island: A Brief History of Haitians, Race, and Racism in the Dominican Republic

In the summer of 2013, the same time the American team members heard Reinaldo's story, discrimination against Haitians had increased again in the Dominican Republic. The years shortly prior had been a brief period of relative co-existence that included the rare opening of Dominican borders to Haitian refugees following the devastating 2010 earthquake in Haiti and subsequent hurricanes that wreaked destruction on the already

suffering country. Soon after this, however, in September of 2013, a ruling on the Dominican constitution renewed existing racial tensions by revoking the basic citizenship rights of many Haitian-Dominicans, even many who had been born and had lived their entire lives in the country, effectively rendering hundreds of thousands of persons stateless.[14]

The 2013 ruling was the result of longstanding racial animosity between the two countries that share the island of Hispaniola. The complex history behind it goes back to 1697, when the island was divided between two colonial powers: France took control of the western third of the island, present-day Haiti, and Spain, the eastern two-thirds, the present-day Dominican Republic. Different methods of colonization led to a large population of enslaved Africans in the French colony, where they were forced to work in vast sugar-cane fields, and a more mixed-race population in the Spanish colony, where intensive production of sugar did not become a focus of economic activity until the early decades of the 20th century. The Spanish colony was less dependent on enslaved people's labor and more interracial relations developed, as in other New World Spanish colonies. These facts would later be used as the basis of a "white-washed" revisionist version of Dominican heritage and history as *indio* and Spanish.

A major turning point for relations between the two countries was Haitian independence in 1804, which eventually led to the Haitian occupation of the Dominican Republic (1821–1844) and the subsequent Dominican War of Independence (1844–1856). Haitian independence was significant to the countries' relations because it led to

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[14] Of the estimated 10.5 million Haitian-Dominicans residing in the country, about 500,000 are Haitian-born immigrants.

the active creation of the Dominican Republic, both within and outside of the country, as an ideological contrast to Haiti as other. In her book *Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Racial Identity from Museums to Beauty Shops,* Ginetta Candelario (2007, 36) asserts that "travel narratives of the two countries formed part of an evolving geopolitical racial project that did the ideological 'work' of both U.S. imperialism and Dominican nation building through anti-Haitianist discourses." These racial projects contributed to the Dominican Republic's denial of Blackness, portraying Haiti as "getting blacker and blacker" and the Dominican Republic as whiter and more industrious, and thus more attractive to Western developers. As the only nation run by formerly enslaved people and the world's first Black republic, Haiti posed a threat to the European colonial powers, which feared its challenge to white supremacy as possible inspiration for more slave revolts. Haiti would be punished by means of centuries of embargoes and also by being forced to pay reparations to France for the enslaved Africans that France "lost" in the war, both of which economically devastated the country. Haiti's attempts at economic recovery have continuously been thwarted by depletion of the once-fertile land, political instability, and related factors. The poor economy, political turmoil, high population density, and periodic natural disasters led many Haitians to migrate to the Dominican Republic throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries.

Haitian immigrants and Haitian-Dominicans' incorporation into Dominican society has been encumbered by a history of violent discrimination. During the 1920s, thousands of Haitians were forcibly brought to the Dominican Republic and enslaved, made to cut sugar cane for the country's burgeoning sugar industry, which continues to

dominate the local economy and holds great influence over national politics. Although these conditions have improved significantly in the past several decades, such as the end to forced relocation of undocumented workers in 1997 and the removal of firearms from plantation security, leaving cane workers to leave freely, still a majority of workers remain in isolated plantation villages, lacking access to education and clean water and working, along with migrant seasonal workers, under exploitative conditions, including "the inexorable push of piece-rate wages to work longer and faster" (Martínez 398). Many other violent events continue to cast shadows over Haitian–Dominican relations today. The most significant is the Parsley Massacre of 1937, in which dictator Rafael Trujillo ordered the Dominican military to slaughter thousands of Haitians who were living in the Dominican Republic at the time. Memories of this event as well as more recent violent events, including several lynchings in the 2010s that were largely ignored by the government and local media, create particularly acute problems for persons of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic.

Figure 7: The empty railway cars wait to be filled with sugar cane to be transported to the mill.

Facing international condemnation, the Dominican Republic amended the 2013 law in 2015 in order to provide a path to citizenship. However, thousands still face deportation because they lack access to the paperwork and other resources needed to gain legal residence. It has become virtually impossible for Haitians and Haitian-Dominicans such as Reinaldo, who do not possess *cédulas*,[15] to find work in the country or to receive an education beyond primary school. Meanwhile, beyond the issues of legal status, the barriers to social acceptance are shaped by what many Dominicans claim are insurmountable racial, cultural, linguistic, and religious differences. Most Dominicans identify as *indios* or racially mixed people who speak Spanish, have a Hispanic culture, and practice Catholicism; in contrast, Haitian-Dominicans are widely stereotyped and stigmatized for speaking Creole, having an African culture, and practicing Vodou (Candelario 2007). As a racially mixed country[16] where differences in skin tone generally, but not strictly, fall along class lines, discrimination in the Dominican Republic does not fall neatly onto American conceptions of race and the color line because it is based primarily on national background, although phenotypic features are often used as a stand-in.[17] It is common for people to have both lighter- and darker-

[15] A *cédula* is a legal-residence card, roughly similar to a Social Security card in the US. Since the 2013 law has been in effect, however, it is increasingly required for access to medical care and education, and even for shopping at a supermarket.

[16] 70.4% of the population self-identify as Mestizo/Indio or Mulatto, 15.8% as Black, and 13.5% as White (CIA World Fact Book 2021).

[17] Most common is discrimination against Haitians, but other immigrant groups are increasingly facing backlash, most notably Venezuelans, whose presence has increased from an estimated 5,000 to over 300,000 in recent years due to the refugee crisis that began in 2015.

skinned relatives, or for half-siblings to differ markedly in skin tone. *Ser negro/a*, or to be Black, can be a point of pride, and affectionate nicknames such as *mi negro/a* are common among close relations. *Haitiano*, though, is frequently used as a slur.

Taking on a new identity as Christian[18] offers a way for Haitian-Dominicans to circumvent some aspects of the racialized stigma of their heritage. Minority groups around the world have found conversion to be a strategy for negotiating their status and transforming their marginalized identities (Louis 2015). In Latin America, beginning in the 1980s, Protestantism spread rapidly, especially among poor and racialized groups (Stoll 1990). In the Dominican Republic, an estimated 33% of Haitian-Dominicans identify as Protestant, compared to 18% of the total Dominican population (Louis 2007).

In narrating their conversion experiences to Americans, Haitian-Dominicans articulate their experiences of larger social issues such as denial of citizenship, class-based exploitation, poverty, and racial discrimination. Haitian conversion to Protestant Christianity involves rejecting both Catholicism, the dominant religion of the Dominican Republic that is associated with the country's Hispanic heritage, and Haitian Vodou, a syncretic religion that melds folk-Catholic and West African belief systems. Conversion thus affords Haitian-Dominicans a way of situating themselves outside of the Haitian/Dominican dichotomy, both culturally and religiously. Participation in Christian STMs is a means for Haitian-Dominicans to transform their marginalized cultural, racial, and religious identities, and thus improve their access to resources such as employment

[18] That is to say, non-Catholic. In many Latin American countries, including the Dominican Republic, people commonly distinguish between Catholics and non-Catholics, referring to the latter as "Christians"). "Christian" typically refers to Protestant sect, such as Adventist and Baptist.

and assistance with their residency applications; many such resources are provided by Christian churches and Christian-affiliated organizations.

My interviews and observations revealed that Americans' knowledge of Dominican and Haitian history varied, as did their awareness of contemporary issues involving the two countries. Some had little to no knowledge, especially the youth participants (high-school- and college-age students). Others, particularly those who had traveled to the Dominican Republic previously, knew about some of this history as well as about the current problems of discrimination. However, their knowledge centered around the same dichotomy, first constructed in 19th-century rhetoric, that contrasts development in the Dominican Republic to the supposed chaotic backwardness of Haiti that is described in the colonial documents analyzed by Candelario. As I explain below, American STM participants, unlike the audiences of those 19th-century documents, were not deterred from involvement with Haitians, but were more greatly motivated to come to their aid through social, economic, and spiritual outreach.

STMs as Racial(izing) Encounters

American participants in STMs are mostly white. In a comprehensive study of US religious engagement in globalization, Robert Wuthnow (2009, 169) notes that two-thirds of predominantly evangelical churches are the most likely to sponsor an STM, compared to half of predominantly mainline Protestant churches and one-third of churches in historically Black denominations. Christian's (2016, 769) research with more than 130 STM participants revealed that 96% of those participants were Caucasian, in stark contrast to the US in general (roughly 66% Caucasian) and even US Christians (also 66%

Caucasian). Only 1% of long-term missionaries are Black. Christian (2016) suggests that one contributing factor are the class biases in STM representation that I discussed in Chapter 3. Participants must be relatively wealthy in order to attend college and to have free time and money for travel, especially international travel (Christian 2016, 770). Of the approximately 300 American participants whom I observed as part of my own research, there were only two who identify as Black or African-descent, Frances and Dahlia. Three others self-identified as Hispanics; they included Betty, a US-born woman of Puerto Rican and Colombian descent who later went on to work more closely with ABC Mission in the hopes of becoming their STM coordinator; José, an immigrant from Venezuela who had traveled with the Making a Difference team multiple times as their interpreter; and Cristóbal, a Cuban-born nurse who had been rescued by a Dominican ship when he was fleeing his homeland by raft, and now, 10 years later, was motivated to give back to the country that had saved him by volunteering on a medical mission. Chapter 8 will describe how Frances and Dahlia, the sole American participants of color with whom I worked during my research, interpreted issues concerning race, inequality, and STMs in the Dominican Republic markedly differently from their white colleagues.

Many white participants, particularly parents of young participants, believe that STMs present an opportunity to engage in sustained interaction with racial and cultural others,[19] a belief that effectively excludes from consideration such interactions that occur in the US. Moreover, participants' limited experiences with interracial and cross-cultural

[19] This is also true for many Dominican and Haitian-Dominican STM participants, whose interactions with Americans mostly take place during tourism encounters, including STMs and secular service trips.

social interaction lead to misperceptions about race that manifest in everyday interactions and discourses and shape how they approach the encounter.

Among the white, non-Hispanic American STM participants with whom I worked, many admitted to having little interaction with Black Americans in their daily lives. For instance, Kelsey, a physical therapist from Louisville, told me that the only Black people she knows are children adopted into white families. Kelsey explained that six of her friends had adopted a Black child, and she hoped to adopt a Black child too. She spent much of her time on the mission inquiring about adoption laws in the Dominican Republic[20] and covertly photographing Dominican girls' hairstyles for inspiration for her friends' children who, apart from what could be found in blogs written by other transracial adoptive parents, did not have exposure to Black hairstyles. The Americans' lack of interracial social relations extends beyond their daily lives to their religious fraternization as well. In a conversation with Reinaldo, Jason, ABC's missionary, and David, a visiting team leader from central Illinois, explained that many of the teams hail from small cities and relatively rural areas of the US, where there is little racial and ethnic diversity. Reinaldo gestured to his own skin color and joked that, if he were to visit their hometowns, he would be "like a fly in the soup." "Yeah," responded

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[20] An everyday discursive practice among STM participants is to casually joke about adopting the non-orphaned children whom they meet on an STM. There is often an element of truth to these jokes, as many married couples on STMs to the Dominican Republic do seriously consider adopting children from the country, and some have done so. In most cases, though, the Dominican Republic's adoption laws, which require prospective adoptive parents to reside in the country for a minimum of a year, eventually deter them from adopting from the Dominican Republic, leading them to other countries. The three couples whom I observed who adopted children after their STM adopted children from China. They wrote publicly about how their decision to adopt was in part motivated by the children living in poverty with whom they had connected while on an STM in the Dominican Republic.

Jason, “we have like one Black guy at our church.” David then interjected, jokingly boasting, “Hey, we have *two* Black guys at our church.” Despite a growing number of Black evangelicals in the US, my participants’ churches largely remained segregated spaces. This is significant because, Yancey (2001, 185) in his work on multiracial churches found that Whites who are a minority in a congregation are more concerned about the inequality that Blacks face than their counterparts who attend a congregation where they are the majority.

STMs’ efforts to support Christian communities in the Dominican Republic are part of a religious movement toward racial reconciliation that arose in the US in the 1990s. According to Elisha (2010, 277), “The aim of racial reconciliation, in the minds of white evangelicals, is the formation of redemptive relationships across once-impenetrable cultural boundaries. It is anticipated that such relationships will radically transform individual lives and society as a whole.” Some predominantly white churches, such as those studied by Elisha, form partnerships with Black evangelical churches in the US. Other churches and church-affiliated groups, such as the STM teams in my study, render assistance to economically depressed, predominantly Black neighborhoods or areas affected by natural disasters. For example, in the decade following Hurricane Katrina, for instance, the New Orleans area received an unprecedented number of faith-based service trips aiming to help rebuild the city. However, according to Priest (2009, 179) despite the “emphasis on transcendent Christian unity, interpersonal connection and transcultural relationships, even among adults,” during STM encounters “race is often glossed over or denied as a significant factor.”

The goal of racial reconciliation has been adopted by the Dominican congregations as well. Pastor Ricardo tells visiting Americans that the church welcomes Haitians and peoples of all races. Like with the merengue worship songs, I only observed Pastor Ricardo make this declaration when Americans were present. However, that may be because the perception is shared by many in the church, including both Dominicans and Haitians-Dominicans, who repeated it to me and told me that they did not believe that there was discrimination at the church based on race or nationality. In fact, for many of the church's Haitian members, this acceptance and feeling of belonging were features that had attracted them to that church. Building on this discourse, Pastor Ricardo announced to an American team that he planned to purchase and display flags that represented the different nationalities of those who attended the church, including an American flag as a nod to their financial support of the ABC mission and their participation in STMs.

Among Americans, this kind of Christian fraternity is more often extended to racialized others than to racialized familiars. Javier, a Dominican medical doctor hired by ABC to run their free medical clinic, believes strongly in the work that STM teams do and personally feels indebted to medical missions for allowing him to observe and participate in medical STMs, just like American youths. But Javier is also critical of what he characterizes as the hypocrisy of the American volunteers, saying, "The people who come here wouldn't help Dominican people or Black people in the United States. They just see them as poor and Black. They pass poor Black people or poor Dominican people on the street. They would never hug them the way that they do here." Having traveled to

the US twice, in order to visit STM teams' churches at their invitation as well as to visit his brother, who emigrated to the US and lives in the Bronx, Javier's claims are based on his firsthand experiences of what he perceives to be the relationships that American evangelicals form with Dominicans during STMs, as compared to the relationships that they form with African-Americans and immigrants of color in the US. This could be explained in part by the widespread white evangelicals' belief in the American Dream, a foundational element of their late-capitalist moral ideologies: the notion that everyone in the United States, equally and regardless of race or nationality, has the opportunity to succeed.

Mission work abroad is a global extension of the efforts toward racial reconciliation outlined above; in practice, though, international STMs have little impact on, or connection to, participants' actions after they return home. The desire for interracial fellowship during STMs, outside of the context of race relations in their own society, is suggestive of American participants' misconceptions of race in the Dominican Republic based on stereotypes and biases. STM participants often find themselves in the position of having to defend their decision to support charitable efforts abroad when there are also worthy causes and people in need back home. They typically give one or more of several standard responses, including admitting that the STM is self-serving. According to Kelsey, participating in an STM is "important for me to learn how to better live my life and to better serve others in the US." Moreover, she believes that STMs were divinely ordained in God's commandment to go into the world and serve others.

As I explained in Chapter 1, participants believe that STMs are about more than providing goods and services. They are also about building social relationships as members of "the Kingdom" and sharing belonging in the figurative Body of Christ. Jason voices this sentiment and also asserts the importance of STMs for religious socialization. Through STMs, he says, "Americans are able to see people from somewhere else being Christian, and even more importantly, they see Black people who are Christian," implying social distance from Black Christians in the US. For Jason and many team leaders, the goal of STMs is Christian fellowship. Fellowship is generally described in Acts 2:42.[21] Fellowship refers to horizontal social relationships among Christians as brothers and sisters in Christ, built around companionship and shared religious beliefs and practices.

At the same time that American participants strive to establish egalitarian relations with their Dominican and Haitian-Dominican counterparts, which is undermined by racist ideologies that underlie American STMs as well as by racializing discourses that are produced during STMs. Sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2003) explains that racism is not necessarily a static or inherent quality that defines an individual, but is instead a function of institutions, norms, and practices that are reproduced through everyday talk and behavior by people who may not intend to discriminate and may not

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[21] Acts 2: **42** They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. **43** Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. **44** All the believers were together and had everything in common. **45** They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. **46** Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, **47** praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

think of themselves as holding racist beliefs. The racist ideologies and racializing discourses expressed during STMs form part of the so-called “new racism.” New racism is defined by Valentina Pagliai (2009) as a more symbolic form of racism that shifts the focus of racist ideologies from matters of skin color and other physical differences (as in “old” racism) to perceived essential, innate, and immutable cultural differences. According to Augoustinos and Every (2007), a pervasive characteristic of racializing discourse in new racism is the near-ubiquitous denial of prejudice by claiming a relationship with a racial other. For example, highlighting their fellowship, Americans often refer to Dominicans as their “brothers and sisters in Christ,” which denotes an egalitarian relationship, but at the same time, familial titles, such as the use of the term “sister church,” in Elisha’s research (2010, 279) obscures the inegalitarian aspects of the relationship. On less formal occasions, however, I heard white American men refer to Dominican men as “ma brotha in Christ.” This is an example of mock African American Vernacular English (AAVE), a linguistic appropriation of the contact language that developed from African languages and English in the context of the transatlantic slave trade. According to Chun on the transracial use of AAVE (2001, 57), “The irony, or perhaps the deceptiveness of this linguistic ‘borrowing’ is that it is done under a façade of cultural appreciation and cultural plurality.” STM participants perform mock AAVE in order to downplay racist beliefs and potentially reduce racial tensions because of the false belief that AAVE makes the speaker appear informal and fun by creating a semblance of coolness or familiarity.

Although STMs occur outside of the American racial context, the participants carry with them conceptions of race from US folk ideologies. Americans mistakenly assign these American folk ideologies of race, like AAVE, to Dominicans and Haitian-Dominicans. In his work on Dominican Americans, Benjamin Bailey (2002, 166) asserts that, due to the legacy of the US's historical "one-drop" rule of racial classification, Dominicans are regarded by American STM participants as Black or African-American. Most of the Dominicans with whom I worked identified as mixed-race, aligning with the national discourse: some mix of Spanish, Indigenous, and African. Because of this, Dominicans had a stronger sense of racial affinity with white Americans than the Americans had with them. During STMs, American participants generalize Black-specific racial stereotypes that exist in the US to Dominicans, who may not racially or culturally identify as Black. Many of these stereotypes are examples of so-called classic racism. For instance, a freshman college student, Madi, shared her journal that she kept before and during her STM. In it, she expressed several times about how excited she was to go to the Dominican Republic and "eat fried chicken and drink grape drank," racist mainstays in the depiction of African Americans. Although the comment, expressed privately, may seem to be on the more innocuous end of racist ideas, it demonstrates the pervasiveness of everyday racism that shapes racial expectations. This mention of racialized cuisine, seemingly rather frivolous, still manages to essentialize and otherize African American culture by reducing it to the named food and beverage items, which are regarded as unhealthy and cheap. The expressions of everyday racism in Madi's journal, along with other examples, such as Americans' perceptions of Dominicans as acting

"ghetto" (a racist expression used to describe something considered uncouth or dirty), indicate Americans' expectations of the people whom they would encounter during their STMs as well as their understanding of race and racialized groups as stable and unchanging from country to country.

The remainder of this chapter addresses some of the more harmful racializing and racist stereotypes that are reproduced through the otherizing discourses and practices of STMs. These racializing discourses and practices are systemic to STMs and can ultimately have material effects on the ways that Americans on STMs approach giving, influencing what they give and to whom they give. Like other kinds of tourist encounters, STMs reproduce power inequalities through allusions to romantic tropes of the noble savage and to stereotypes that (mis)inform the decision to participate in an STM in the first place.

White-Savior Narratives of Haiti and Africa

Part of the American Christian motivation to serve on an STM in a predominantly Black or racially mixed country draws on notions of a monolithic Africa, a place without distinct nations, impoverished and violent, and rife with AIDS and other diseases. Africa, for many white evangelicals, is the gold-standard destination for missions and charitable aid. Some STM volunteers with whom I worked had traveled to Africa on previous STMs or were familiar with aid to Africa through their support of organizations such as Compassion International and of long-term missionaries and faith-based organizations across the continent. As is common among Americans, STM participants refer to Africa, the continent, as a single entity without national boundaries or other such internal

differentiations. Even those who had a connection to Africa, such as sponsoring a missionary or child, rarely referred to the specific country and, when asked, often could not recall which country it was. Africa was often brought up as a point of comparison to the Dominican Republic. Kelsey, for example, frequently cited the conditions that she had seen in Africa as a reason not to help Dominicans, who, she believed, did not demonstrate enough need. According to Kelsey, kids in Africa had even less. These comments resemble those that Howell (2012, 49) reports in his ethnography of STMs in the Dominican Republic: participants worried that their trip was too much like a vacation and not enough like traveling to Africa, where "you can really just see the need."

Travel to Africa for an STM can be cost prohibitive, however. Due to its close proximity to the US and its oft-repeated status as the "poorest and least developed country in the Western hemisphere," many STM teams are attracted to Haiti, which they view as the place outside of Africa where they can "do the most good." One American missionary, Carlos, would declare to his teams that, even after having lived all over the world, including in "the slums of Brazil and Liberia," he had never witnessed a more destitute group than the Haitians living in Dominican bateyes. However, this desire to help Haiti and Haitian-Dominicans living in bateyes is decontextualized from the US's complicity over the past two centuries—at times, its leading role—in the economic destruction of Haiti, and from the team's own complicity in labor conditions in the fields and refineries, which produce sugar for major US brands such as Domino sugar.

American missionaries discursively construct Haiti as having the greatest economic need as well as racialized cultural and spiritual need because of Vodou, which,

to evangelicals, puts Haitians at a farther remove from salvation than members of other Christian groups, such as Catholics. Similar to the colonial travel portrayals described by Candelario are the comparisons drawn by American missionaries between Haiti and the generic Africa that was mentioned above. Haiti, like Africa, is often discussed in broad and generalizing terms by STM participants, who comment on how "bad" things are there. According to Jason, "they'll take anyone. Even a high-school student can perform a medical operation" during a mission to Haiti. Haiti is constructed as needing help, but also as dangerous. Americans who had traveled on an STM to Haiti recounted that their mission team had to hire armed guards and that they were forbidden from interacting with Haitians, apart from children. Another told the rest of his team, with great flourish, the story of how he had been held up at gunpoint and almost kidnapped in Haiti, but had been saved by what he described as a mysterious presence, which he and his captors took to be an angel. Because Haiti is considered so dangerous, many Americans divert their attention to Haitians outside of Haiti, particularly those who work on the sugar-cane plantations in the Dominican Republic.

The presence of Haitians at ABC's churches and ABC's mission to treat Haitians equally are in many ways commodified as forms of spiritual capital, Verter's (2003) Bourdieu-inspired notion which is, in theory, accessible by anyone, and not just religious officials. At ABC, the American missionary and the Dominican pastors produce narratives about the Haitian-Dominican experience at their church, such as Pastor Ricardo's narrative of racial-harmony, that promotes their moral and spiritual capital.

American participants, as audience to these narratives are then compelled to volunteer and donate to the church.

During one STM, Jason explained to the American group that they would be going to one of the Haitian churches:

> We have two plant churches that are in Creole. Anybody know what Creole is? Creole is the language of the Haitian people. Maybe you'll be able to hear some, I'll have them play a Haitian song for you. You may have heard things about Haitians. Well, the Haitians are people just like you and me and the Dominicans and everybody needs Jesus, so we have a service for them.

Jason implies that the team's knowledge about Haitians might involve negative information. In other conversations, Jason characterized the Creole language as "bad French," a racist characterization similar to many white Americans' characterizations of AAVE as "bad" English. In this instance, Jason puts Creole on display as exotic entertainment to be consumed. He argues that Haitians are people just like everyone else, but by underscoring this point, he implicitly represents Haitians as occupying a position as other, which is typical among Dominicans and Christians. Moreover, he emphasizes the spiritual capital of his own church, which ostensibly treats everyone equally. Similarly, many STM participants view providing for Haitians as more "moral" than providing for Dominicans because of their stigmatized status. A group's "worthiness" of charity is a frequent topic of discussion for American mission teams. These and similar characterizations of Haitians are often openly discussed in front of the Dominican church's congregation, including when there are Haitians in attendance.

Discursive constructions such as those considered above are reproduced in the narratives constructed by STM participants. One woman, Karen, wrote in her journal:

> As we drove up [to the batey] we heard a swelling chant of "Americana, Americana!" which referred to me in the back seat. When I stepped out of the jeep I was instantly surrounded by children. They were pointing at me and laughing and all wanted to touch my white skin, which would make them shriek and laugh even harder. A few reached up to touch my red hair, which made them squeal with disbelief. Any attempt on my part to speak Spanish was relentlessly mocked and then mimicked in a silly voice. Every child wanted to hold my hand, so when I walked anywhere, I had a different child attached to all ten fingers! Some of the children surprisingly had blondish-reddish hair, similar to the Aborigines in Australia. (This is a sign of severe anemia.) Most of the children were barefoot and wore only the remnants of donated American clothes.

Karen's journal is steeped in tropes of the white-savior narrative. She presents a story akin to a first-contact event in which she, with her white skin and red hair, is surrounded by barefoot children. They are so amazed by the colors of her skin and hair that they just want to touch them; and touching them makes the children shriek and squeal in disbelief. Interestingly, she describes the children as being in disbelief over her red hair color and also describes children with similarly colored hair. She concludes by implying that the children were not have clothes at all if it were not for the American donations.

Narratives of Crime

Motivated by the imaginary that was described above, in which Africa and Haiti are too dangerous to be destinations for STMs, STM teams travel to the Dominican Republic, where they are the audience for Jason's and other missionaries' stories of young Black men demonstrating religious and spiritual capital. These events serve as powerful counter-narratives in relation to the narratives of Black violence and crime that are more

familiar to these American audiences. In their tellings, Jason and other missionaries implicitly or explicitly portray themselves as saving these young men and leading them to Christian lives.

Significantly, these narratives are told by the missionaries rather than by the men they describe. Although the personal religious testimony is a popular speech genre among evangelicals, Reinaldo's story only emerged during conversations in which it was narrated by Jason. Although I had heard it multiple times before, I asked Reinaldo to share his testimony during an interview with me, so that I would be able to compare Jason's version with his own telling. The narrative that he produced differs from Jason's telling, with less emphasis on what he was wearing during his confrontation with police. His version focuses instead on how the event was the catalyst for his decision to fully commit himself to the church and to be baptized. To some extent, Reinaldo's narrative thus contradicts Jason's, which constructs the mission and Reinaldo's discipleship with Jason as the catalyst for Reinaldo's conversion.

Jason's version of Reinaldo's story was not the only missionary-narrated testimony that depicted virtuous young Black men who were saved by the mission. Another frequently told story was that of Yunior, the man who was touched by the people in the batey, as I described in Chapter 3. Jason's rendering of Yunior's narrative was taken up by the Making a Difference team and published in their annual report, as follows:

> A couple of years ago, Yunior witnessed a group of young men committing a burglary at a small store […]. Yunior knew the boys and later told the store owner who they were. The store owner eventually tracked the boys down…and with a machete in hand, began to threaten

> them. During the altercation, the boys gained control of the machete and cut the store owner very badly. He was hospitalized and nearly lost his life.
>
> The young men were found and sent to jail but threatened to kill Yunior once they were released. So Yunior's mother went to the church […]to ask for help. The church was able to facilitate relocation assistance for Yunior for a period of about 6 months.
>
> After Yunior returned […], he was at church when the group of young men showed up unexpectedly and physically abused Yunior. The local authorities have spoken to the boys and they apparently have agreed to leave him alone. But still, Yunior fears for his life every day.

Black violence and crime are prominent themes in this narrative, as in some politically motivated discourses about African American males in the US. In this case, however, Yunior, a dark-skinned Dominican whose photograph is shown beside the published narrative, is the victim of violence, which the American teams perceive as Black-on-Black crime, which is often cited by conservative American politicians as evidence of Black criminality. Black-on-Black violence is also used by some Americans to detract from police violence against Black Americans, as during the American team's conversation about the Trayvon Martin incident, in which they cited Black-on-Black violence as the real racist threat to society. Here, Yunior is set up as a counterexample of the stereotype of the Black criminal: as a Black youth who became a victim due to his moral choices to help stop Black crime. Joe, the leader of Making a Difference, published Yunior's narrative as evidence of the difference that his team and the mission have made in Yunior's life, which should inspire the team's donors to continue to contribute, much like Jason's telling of Reinaldo's testimony.

Narrative Trope of the Magical Negro

Scholars such as Birth (2006) assert that STM participants romanticize the lives and relationships of people in the countries that they visit. During my fieldwork, I found that another popular imagining that is projected onto Dominicans and Haitian-Dominicans is the "Magical Negro" trope, found in film and literature: A Black character who has mysterious and mystical qualities enlightens the white protagonist and helps him or her to overcome obstacles and achieve self-growth. During STMs, this is exemplified when Americans assign spiritual capital to Dominicans and Haitian-Dominicans, describing them as "materially poor but spiritually rich," an expression that I will examine more closely in later chapters. According to STM teams, they learned about humility and other moral values from Dominicans. For example, one morning, as the Freedom team gathered to pray and sing worship songs, the pastor's wife, Raya, led a devotional on 2 Samuel 9:

> Mephibosheth's lot in life was to be dropped and crippled for nothing that he did, and in this time there's no Title XIX or Disability. Mephibosheth has nothing to offer, not even service to offer, he can't even be a servant. He's of no use to David. But David wants to show him God's kindness. We are all like Mephibosheth. We have nothing to offer God, but God in his mercy and kindness covers our sins and invites us to eat at his table as his children. But I also interpret our team as David and Mephibosheth as Haitians. Today we'll come across people, who because of circumstances of which they had no choice, have nothing. We're like King David to them. We were born in America through no work of our own, and now we have the chance to offer that same Grace. Not about being deserving, but because God is so great.

The story of Mephibosheth is one of redemption of even the lowest through their humility. Although Mephibosheth is of the same race as David, he is markedly different because of his disability. Mephibosheth's simple and humble nature is compared to that

of the Haitians; this is meant to inspire the team members to be grateful for their privilege and their ability to help others. However, Americans' respect for Dominicans' spirituality is typically limited to the ways in which it serves Americans' purposes; moreover, it does not extend to afford Dominicans autonomy. According to Elisha (2010, 280), "Paradoxically, African Americans are perceived by some white evangelicals as having an innate spirituality that is deeper and more intense than that of most whites." Significantly, Elisha (2010, 280) argues that white evangelicals "believe in the potential of the black church but doubt the leadership and (implicitly) the moral competence of African American communities." Likewise, Dominicans are admired by American participants for their "deep spirituality," but are rarely trusted or given control over the mission due to tropes that construct Dominicans as incompetent, such as modernization theory and notions of culture of poverty.

Culture-of-Poverty Narratives

As I described in the previous chapter on the encounter with poverty, STM discourse often relies on culture-of-poverty rhetoric. The concept of culture of poverty is used to explain poverty as the consequence of bad or illogical decisions made by poor people, rather than the product of structural conditions such as systemic inequality. Because class status is intricately tied to race through systemic and everyday racism, culture-of-poverty discourse is frequently racialized as well. Like modernization theory, the culture-of-poverty thesis creates a distinction between deserving and undeserving poor. Moreover, the culture of poverty is presented as a pattern of bad behaviors that can be changed through the teaching of Western or American modern values. For instance, American

missionaries and volunteers commonly say that Dominicans act on “Dominican time,” a derogatory stereotype of Dominicans as lazy and non-punctual. “Dominican time” is akin to the phrase “CPT,” or “colored people’s time,” commonly used in the US. The implication is that, if Dominicans were to develop the dedication, drive, and work ethic of middle-class Americans, they would be able to lift themselves out of poverty.

Some American STM participants exhibit thinly veiled racism that takes its cues from commonplace American racist ideologies. For example, Jason’s telling of Reinaldo’s story at the beginning of this chapter opens with a comment about Reinaldo’s clothes that allude to his Blackness: “You know, when you first see him, Reinaldo, you know keeps up this image as a rapper, it’s his look, but he is a really good Christian.” Jason implies a dichotomy in which morality, such as being a good Christian, is reflected in one’s clothing choices. Reinaldo is made an exception to this rule because his clothing is related to his occupation as a Christian rapper. Halfway into the story, Jason comments again about Reinaldo’s clothing, connecting it to his skin color and treating both as potential sources of trouble during a late-night incident because of how they are likely to be construed by law-enforcement officers. Since Reinaldo is a Christian rapper, Jason and STM participants can look past Reinaldo’s attire. However, this does not extend to non-Christians. As Jason would state in his oft-repeated refrain to the visiting teams, “It doesn’t matter if you are Black or white, as long as you all love Jesus.” His comment, which ostensibly calls for transcending considerations of race, excludes non-Christians from this idealized egalitarian harmony and unity, and also effectively erases the institutionalized ways in which racism exists and is enacted. As Christians, Reinaldo and

other Dominican youths can exceed the expectations that the Americans have of them based on their race and outward appearance. In contrast, Trayvon Martin and, by extension, other Black American youths, are denied such mobility; in the team's social imaginary, Martin is never allowed to become anything other than a young Black man suspiciously walking around late at night in a hooded sweatshirt.

White American culture's history of appropriating Black "coolness" is also relevant here. Reinaldo's rap music, an emblem of Black artistic culture, is often put on display for the American teams in order to appeal to them through a performance of Blackness that is celebrated among young white Americans. As described in Chapter 1, Americans' photographic representations of their experiences in the Dominican Republic prominently and almost exclusively feature children; Reinaldo as a rapper is a notable exception. Americans post on social media their videos of his performances and photographs of themselves with him, and they purchase his merchandise.

Although coolness is part of Reinaldo's image as a rapper, and is therefore an investment in himself, Jason is critical of Reinaldo's consumption habits, framing them in culture-of-poverty terms in a narrative that he frequently tells teams.

> The guy has a lot of shoes, and now, I get that he is a rapper, so he has to keep up his image, but he has so many pairs of Air Jordans. Look at me—I don't have any Air Jordans. He went and got $150 shoes! I would never spend $150 on shoes. I spent $30 on my shoes with no brand name. But you know we had a talk with him about that. And he understood. And then when he got married, I told him, "Look, you can't keep spending money like that. You're not a kid anymore. You have a responsibility to provide for your family, you can't have them going hungry at home because you want to buy your shoes." I think he understood.

Jason's description of Reinaldo's consumption practices is representative of the culture-of-poverty thesis, which pathologizes poor people as lacking self-control and knowledge of how to economize. Jason's story centers on Air Jordan shoes, an emblem of irresponsible Black consumption among white Americans. By foregrounding this particular emblem, he goes beyond the ostensibly class-based concerns of the culture-of-poverty thesis and imbues it with racializing assumptions. Anthropologist Elizabeth Chin (2001) in her book *Purchasing Power: Black Kids and American Consumer Culture* describes racist media portrayals that construct African Americans as either irresponsible or even criminal because they are willing to spend their wages (which are assumed to be ill-gotten) or even to kill for a status symbol such as Air Jordan shoes. Portrayals such as these contribute to the already existing negative perceptions of Black culture among white evangelicals, particularly the perception that "black communities lack strong commitments to the virtues of accountability and fiscal solvency. For white evangelicals, this is more than a practical problem; it is viewed as a distinctly moral and spiritual one" (Elisha 2010, 280). Moreover, Jason's implication that Reinaldo acts like "a kid" infantilizes him, especially because Jason is only five years older than Reinaldo. Ironically, a few days after Jason narrated his reproach of Reinaldo's consumption habits, Reinaldo surprised the missionary with a birthday celebration and a gift: a pair of Air Jordan shoes.

Like Madi's fried-chicken stereotype, the Air Jordan story might seem harmless at first glance, but they are both negative, racist portrayals. Moreover, the Air Jordan story reproduces the culture-of-poverty thesis. Misperceptions of Black fiscal responsibility

have material consequences in STM contexts. As the director of the mission, Jason determines how funds are to be spent. During one meeting with the Dominican pastors, Jason told them that he wanted to improve the Haitian churches and to improve the mission's overall relationship with Haitians by making them feel included and "as if they are a part of us." Despite these claims, in other conversations, Jason described Haitians as lazy, irresponsible with money, and greedy with funds received from the mission and STMs. In part because of these beliefs, the two Haitian churches in his mission were not funded as well as the predominantly Dominican churches. The Haitian pastor, John Robert, unlike the Dominican pastors, was not included in the pastor's meetings and was not a salaried employee either, even though he oversaw both of the mission's Haitian churches, which meet more frequently than their Dominican counterparts. The Dominican pastors at the other churches unsuccessfully tried to convince Jason that Pastor John Robert deserved to be paid. So, they decided to donate a small amount of their churches' monthly funds to Pastor John Robert. Jason finally yielded to their urgings, but the amount of money that he provided, 5,000 Dominican pesos per month (about 100 USD), was so small that Arturo, one of the Dominican pastors, protested Jason's decision, characterizing the amount as more of an *ofrenda*, an offering put on the collection plate and given to John Robert, than an actual salary to compensate him for his work.

Jason pushed back, saying, "John Robert is lazy, he is not an evangelist." Jason then defended his decision to not compensate the Haitian pastor by recalling how he once had an American team working construction at one of the Dominican churches, and John

Robert sat in the shade the whole time, despite being a trained carpenter. Jason described how he gave John Robert opportunities to work, taunting him, "Come out of the shade, your skin won't burn," referencing his dark skin. According to Jason, John Robert replied that it was too hot. In response to Arturo, Jason argued that, if John Robert needed the money, then he could have a traditional job in the morning and volunteer as a pastor at night, when services are typically held in the Dominican Republic, saying that this was what many pastors in the country did.

> I love him a lot, and he works hard as a pastor, but first we are servants. Pastors need to get in there and clean the church. That's the difference between a boss and a leader. I've given John Robert opportunities to serve many times. It's not "moreno" work, no, it's, "work because you are with us." Maybe I'm thinking too American, but in my heart that's how I feel, but I also want him to eat and have money.

Here, Jason applies the logic of the culture-of-poverty thesis, much as he did in his story about Reinaldo's Air Jordans. In this instance, though, that logic has direct material effects. Having taken anthropology courses while earning his undergraduate degree in missions from a southern Bible college, Jason tries to imbue his line of reasoning with cultural relativism. He characterizes his decision as representative of American ideologies, meaning values of hard work and personal responsibility, which he then ties to religious ideologies that emphasize moral values such as being a servant. After referencing John Robert's dark skin in a joke, Jason then proceeds to deny any element of racism in his decision, saying, "It's not 'moreno' work," or work for dark-skinned people. He instead emphasizes the ostensibly "colorblind" moral commitment that he expects of all Christians, Americans, Dominicans, and Haitians alike. In so doing, he

erases the fact that John Robert, the sole Haitian leader at ABC, oversees two churches without pay. To Jason, John Robert's volunteer pastoral labor is free service to the church. Jason's statement falls in line with the prominent belief, promulgated by American missionaries to the Dominican churches, that lack of entrepreneurialism largely explains Dominican's stagnant economic circumstances. In a private conversation with me, Jason expanded on this line of thought:

> When a missionary begins to pay someone, this changes the relationship. Always, always, this changes the relationship. I had a real issue with it here when I first came, that we're just now breaking, but it's worse with Haitians. I worked in Haiti [on STMs] for six years and I know the culture well. I don't want a 100% dependent relation. If I start to give money, I don't know what will happen, but I don't want a slippery slope. If you give once, they will never stop asking for things. And that's true of John Robert but I'm mostly talking about his church. If his church knows he is getting paid, that's the start of constant asking for money. So how can we improve relations without doing harm?

Jason's reasoning relies on racist notions of Black people taking advantage of generosity and not necessarily being deserving of basic rights, such as the right to wages or a salary as compensation for work. His posturing that he does not know what will happen if he gives funds to his mission's Haitian churches is reminiscent of the phrase, "If you give someone an inch, they will take an ell." This phrase and the reasoning behind it are racist in origin, as is indicated in writings by Frederick Douglass and Mark Twain. Jason celebrates the spirituality and diversity of his mission's Haitian members as a way of convincing Americans to donate to the mission, but much of the funds raised are not distributed to Haitians or Haitian-Dominicans. Jason's defense is paternalism: he states that he does not want to give them support because he does not want to harm them, effectively arguing that he made that decision for their own good.

Another reason Jason may not fund the Haitian churches in his mission is that his goal is to create self-sufficient churches. This is difficult to accomplish in the poor, rural Haitian communities that John Robert's churches serve due to poverty in those areas, racial discrimination, and lack of job opportunities. Though he often puts them on display, Jason sometimes seems to resent the Haitian churches because ABC did not start them. They had been started by John Robert and were later brought into the fold of the mission, after John Robert established a relationship with Pastor Ricardo.

Haitian Lives Matter

Jason's narrative about Reinaldo that opens this chapter, demonstrates that there is a disconnect between American STM participants' perspectives on undocumented immigration, racism, and inequality in the Dominican Republic and their perspective on similar issues in the US. This is partly because STMs are decontextualized from racism in the US and partly because Americans' lives back home are mostly segregated from communities of color and disconnected from dialogues about race and race relations. This lack of dialogue has been addressed by several researchers of North American evangelicalism, who have noted the difficulty that white, mostly suburban, conservative Christians have with addressing the politics of race in the US (Emerson and Smith 2000). Research has shown a correlation between white evangelicals' frequency of religious participation and their levels of racial resentment. White evangelicals have the highest racial-resentment scores among groups, with 40.5% showing the highest resentment score (4/4) and 20.9% showing the second highest score (3/4). Moreover, among white

evangelicals, those who attend church more than once a week showed higher scores than those who attend church less frequently (Schaffner, Ansolabehere, and Luks 2018). Researchers have also found, however, that STM participants display less ethnocentric beliefs (Priest et al. 2006) and also score higher on the Global Social Responsibility Inventory than their co-religionist counterparts who have not participated in STMs (Beyerlin, Adler, and Trinitapoli 2011, 782). Such research suggests that participation in an STM reflects an openness to other cultures, and may also suggest that STMs promote relativistic or anti-racist ideologies that have an effect over time. I take up this possibility in the conclusion of this dissertation, where I examine American participants' reactions to recent race-related events in the US, such as the tragic killings of unarmed African Americans that led to nationwide protests against injustice in 2020.

Evangelical Christians are not a monolithic political group, as they are often stereotyped to be. Evangelicals overwhelmingly do, however, constitute a voting bloc that supports conservative candidates and causes. In surveys that I administered to the members of several of the STM teams with which I worked, a majority of respondents identified as politically conservative, and only slightly fewer were consistently supportive of then-US president Donald Trump and his policies. During a church service in the Dominican Republic, some Americans prayed to God, thanking him for installing a God-fearing leader in the White House, citing Trump's then-recent invitation to religious leaders to pray with him in the Oval Office. Other participants have made comments on social media that sided with Trump on a number of political issues, most prominently, his stances on undocumented immigration and his racially charged derision of National

Football League players' decision to kneel during the national anthem in protest of police killings of unarmed African Americans. Relatedly, STM participants indicating their support, were silent on social media during the 2018 midterm elections when Trump made known that he was considering ending birthright (or *jus solis*) citizenship in the US and flamed fears criminalizing the "caravan" of Central American migrants who were making their way toward the US. I draw attention to these issues because they parallel issues that the participants recognized, and spoke out against, in the Dominican Republic: racial profiling and police violence, discrimination based on citizenship status, and the lack of *jus solis* policies that prevent Haitians born in the Dominican Republic from attaining citizenship. The Haitian-Dominican fight against oppression resonates in many ways with the Black Lives Matter and DREAMers movements in the US, but a majority of STM participants were opposed to these US-based movements.

The only instance I observed in which the American team members were publicly critical of racist ideas promoted by Trump was when he made pejorative comments about Haiti. In January 2018, comments by Trump in which he characterized parts of Africa as well as El Salvador and Haiti as "shithole countries" were leaked to the press. Trump allegedly added, "Why do we need more Haitians? Take them out" (Washington Post 2018). These remarks were met with outrage by his evangelical supporters who had participated in STMs. One team leader used the comment to mobilize volunteers for his next STM, posting the following on his social media account alongside a photo of himself on an STM with a young Haitian-Dominican man:

> If you are upset, shocked, concerned, or confused about the "shithole" comments from Pres. Trump, come see for yourself. Join me and 125+

> other volunteers this summer in the Dominican Republic and be inspired by Haitians and Dominicans in a way you can't imagine. It will be life-changing-guaranteed.

This post was shared by many team members, some of whom added their own pleas to respect and love Haitians. The post treats Trump's comments delicately and does not explicitly offer a critique. The comment acknowledges that some may be upset by Trump's comments, implying that the comments are hurtful and perhaps wrong. At the same time, though, the leader's intended meaning is ambiguous. On one hand, he asks his audience to come and form their own understandings and judgments, calling on them to participate in an STM. But the post can also be interpreted as implying that, although Trump's comments are dehumanizing, his characterization of poverty might be accurate and should warrant concern—concern that should inspire one to volunteer to change those conditions, but not to defend Haitian immigration to the US.

Notwithstanding their outrage at the leaked "shithole" comments, which garnered media coverage for weeks, American team members were silent on the Trump administration's actions in November 2017 to rescind the protections that had been granted to 60,000 Haitians after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. These actions included an order that Haitian refugees must return to Haiti by July 2019. The silence on these developments may have been due to the fact that they went largely unnoticed by the American public. Members of American STM teams were probably also unaware of Trump's choice of ambassador to the Dominican Republic, Robin S. Bernstein, a member of Trump's exclusive Mar-a-Lago Club, who had been vocal in her support of the Dominican government's crackdown on Haitian immigration and the 2013 legislative

changes that were described in the opening of this chapter. Ambassador Bernstein also supported the deportation of Haitians from the Dominican Republic, likening them to Latin American immigrants in the US (who, in her view, should also be deported).

If Americans' STM experiences fall short of "life-changing," it is because they are constituted in terms of racializing understandings of poverty in the Dominican Republic that go unchallenged and are even reproduced through romanticizing narratives about Black youths that simultaneously praise Dominicans and Haitian-Dominicans for their "spirituality" and punish them for their supposed poor decisions and lack of personal responsibility, which are regarded as moral failures. Moreover, these mission trips are decontextualized from Americans' everyday lives, from US government policies, and from larger global processes. Americans have little prior knowledge about the Dominican Republic or the status of Haitians in the Dominican Republic, and the STM is not designed around the goal of educating participants about this background. Race and slavery were rarely if ever mentioned. Kelsey remarked that she thought that it was "funny how God orchestrates things like putting Africans with kinky hair, which doesn't need to be washed and doesn't do bad in the heat, in hot places." Her offhand comment attributing the presence of people of African descent in the Caribbean to God's will reflects the STM's erasure of the forcible transport of tens of millions of African people to the Western hemisphere for the purposes of enslaved labor.

As I will explain in the following chapters, Americans' failure to connect their own lives to the poverty and racial discrimination that they witness during STMs shapes and is shaped by their ontological orientation to "evil" in the world. Their perceptions

and understandings of evil, including poverty and racism, and of their own and their Dominican counterparts' relationships to these and other such forms of evil, influence their giving practices, which ultimately do not address the root causes of these issues.

CHAPTER 5

CALLING NARRATIVES, ORATORICAL UNIONS, AND CREATING THE DIVINE HERO

> I went to [the Dominican Republic] with a belief that nothing I could see or hear or experience could shake me. After all, I was born in Jamaica, another so called "third world" country that was very similar to Haiti and the Dominican Republic. I said to myself, "I've seen hungry children, entire families living in cardboard houses with zinc roof tops. As a matter of fact, some of my own family members still live in those conditions." What I witnessed in the Bateyes blew away all my preconceived notions and barriers…Looking at wide eyed children who seemed to be the only ones at times that laughed and seemed "happy", yet all I could see was skin and bone because of the malnutrition. The children however did something more for me, than the adults. It was as if God held a mirror as big as everything I could see and said "LOOK AT YOURSELF!" In those moments with the children, I did see myself, and I became utterly speechless before God. I could find nothing really differences [sic] between the children and myself. They looked like me, played like me, and was just as curious about things as I was at that age. I asked the Lord throughout the entire trip, why me Lord? Why did my parents come to America? Why am I not amongst these children? Why didn't you take this boy or this girl? Why? The Lord answered me throughout the entire trip, "I've got work for you to do." This is something the Lord has told me before back in the States, however it was confirmed and made real in the Dominican Republic. I began to see my life as not just a series of coincidences and random acts of fate, but as a life that has been sustained by the grace of God… My life was spared on many occasions not for my sake but for service [to] God. I understood that better as we served the people in [the batey] in the name of Jesus Christ.
>
> -- Tara's personal reflection, as reproduced on EDCM promotional materials

Encountering "Third World" poverty, global inequality, and racial injustice firsthand during short-term missions, Americans try to make sense of their experiences. What they

witness abroad often must be reconciled with their pre-existing religious beliefs and other aspects of their worldviews. Ignoring the broader sociohistorical context of colonialism as well as their own complicit role in the global systemic inequality that is characteristic of late capitalism, they focus on religious explanations. Some, such as Tara in the excerpt above, ask themselves, Why should they have so much material wealth and Dominicans so little? They recognize a shared humanity and ponder what separates them from the Dominicans, which can ultimately redefine their understandings of their own identities. For instance, Tara writes, "In those moments with the children I did see myself." In this way, STMs are powerful, eye-opening experiences that call for self-reflection, a reconsideration of everyday practices and beliefs, and religious contemplation. Bringing Americans face to face with the suffering of others, STMs can serve to confirm or reaffirm their religious beliefs. During STMs, the world—and God's omnipotence over it—becomes much bigger than they had previously conceived, and they turn to God to make sense of it all. Removed from the secularism of "modern" life and from some of their own privileges based in class and nationality, American evangelicals feel more connected to God when they see "real" need for material goods as well as what they perceive as a desperation for hope that, they believe, can only be met by their religion. American STM participants are also amazed by the commitment to God that they witness among people who have not been as blessed financially as themselves. For these and similar reasons, many young Americans make the decision to be baptized and to commit their lives to God shortly after participating in STMs. The mission prompts visiting participants to think about their place in the world, their relationship with God, and the

power of God. For example, Tara writes, “I began to see my life as not just a series of coincidences and random acts of fate, but as a life that has been sustained by the grace of God.” For Tara, the STM revealed a purpose and gave a meaning and structure to her past life as well as to her current trajectory. Tara and other STM participants like her find solace in seeing their lives as part of God’s design. For some, though, witnessing extreme poverty and suffering and the seeming lack of divine intervention leads to a crisis of faith.

Figure 8: A young American woman is baptized by her youth pastor at the beach while on her second trip to the Dominican Republic.

For American STM participants, becoming aware of the vast inequalities between their own lives and the lives of local people can present disjuncture: a crisis that centers around having to find ways to navigate the underlying and unresolvable tensions and contradictions of everyday life in a social system. Such moments of disjuncture expose the arbitrariness of the social order. This crisis is a necessary condition for questioning doxa, the system of implicit and unquestioned beliefs about society’s workings (Bourdieu 1977). Participants may be led to question their relationship with the world: why do they have what they have, what responsibility do they have to help, in what ways can they

change the situation for local people? They may also reconsider their relationship with God: how can they be good Christians, how has God directed their lives, and why has God not intervened in the suffering that they see before them? This latter question is a frequent topic of STM devotionals and everyday conversations. To evade a crisis of faith, many participants reconcile the existence of "evils" in the world, such as child hunger and domestic violence in the bateyes, with their own religious beliefs in an omnipotent and benevolent god. This dilemma, referred to by theologians as the "problem of evil," is a question that confronts most religions. For instance, Buddhists find their resolution through the Buddha's realization that existence is suffering. Within Christianity, the problem was famously written about by novelist and theologian C. S. Lewis as "the problem of pain" in his 1940 book of that title, in which he posed the question, Why does a loving and all-powerful God allow suffering? STM participants are left questioning God's actions and motivations, even God's existence. Tara, for example, asks, "Why me Lord? Why did my parents come to America? Why am I not amongst these children? Why didn't you take this boy or this girl?" In order to sustain their belief that their God is both omnipotent and good, many American STM participants must confront the predicament posed by the problem of evil as well as explain why they were chosen by God to be so privileged. They typically answer these questions by drawing on two related ideologies that provide models of moral subjectivity and agency, which they draw upon in order to strengthen their relationship with God and affirm their identity as Christians. In resolving the problem of evil, these two ideologies constitute a mode of subjectivation,

or a way in which “people are ‘incited or invited’ to realize their moral obligations” (Foucault 1997, 264).

The first ideology, which I call “Panglossian egoism,” is a means by which American STM participants try to explain why evil exists. It is named after the character Pangloss in Voltaire’s *Candide,* who insists, to everyone’s detriment, that “all is for the best.” Evangelicals similarly frame the inequalities that they encounter as “everything happens for a reason.” However, unlike the misguided character from the Enlightenment-era satire, for contemporary evangelicals, everything that happens is “designed by God” as part of “His plan.” This belief is expressed through various Bible verses that are frequently quoted by STM participants. For instance, one inspirational saying that is frequently shared by STM participants declares, “God has a reason for allowing things to happen. We may never understand his wisdom, but we simply have to trust his will.” This idea, often misattributed as Psalm 37:5, is a popular interpretation of the overarching message of Psalm 37. Regardless, the saying “God has a reason for allowing things to happen” is often used to provide solace to those facing a crisis. Life is seen, as Tara said in regard to her own life, “as not just a series of coincidences and random acts of fate.” This belief is extended to those who have less fortunate lives as well. Through such commonly used phrases as “If it is God’s plan, then it will be” and “We cannot know the plans that God has for us,” American STM participants resist seeking reasons for, or understanding of, this plan. The plan has an order and structure known only by God, and they must simply have faith and trust that “it is part of God’s plans” even when “God works in mysterious ways.” Some likewise found comfort in John 13:7, in which Jesus

tells his disciples, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” The evangelicals with whom I worked took comfort in simply knowing that everything was God’s plan, which enabled them to accept the circumstances that they witnessed.

Suffering is also construed as part of God’s plan. STM participants take inspiration from verses such as Genesis 50:20, which reads, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” The interpretation suggests that events or circumstances that appear to be bad, such as the conditions in the batey, may have been designed to serve some ultimate good. In practice, evangelicals indicate that suffering and other evils exist, at least in part, so that they themselves can witness them and learn from them (hence my use of the term “egoism”). For instance, the passing of a loved one is construed as having a purpose, such as drawing the bereaved closer to God or enhancing their awareness of the sanctity of life. Likewise, when encountering poverty in the Dominican Republic, the suffering of the impoverished can be a moral lesson to the American participants. Consider, for example, the moral lessons discussed in Chapter 3, in which Americans learn from Dominicans’ poverty that they need to be grateful to God for what they have and to strive to live more simply, rejecting greed and materialism. This strategy exemplifies Cole’s (2012) contention that, within the White Savior Industrial Complex, “This world exists simply to satisfy the needs—including, importantly, the sentimental needs—of white people and Oprah.” According to one participant, the STM experience “helped to bring my problems and issues into perspective and helped to show me that God will always

provide." In such ways, participants discursively construct global socioeconomic issues as personal religious revelations. Rather than seeing themselves as materially connected to Dominicans, such as through the transnational production and trade of sugar or tourism, they devise a metaphysical understanding of inequality. The suffering of others is construed as being, subsequently (but not necessarily exclusively), a lesson from God. Most prominently, the lesson that American evangelicals take from the experience is that they must do something to reduce suffering in the world—to "make a difference."

I call this conceptualization of agency and personhood "divine heroism." It is the second of the two aforementioned ideologies that STM participants use to resolve the problem of evil. For Christians, evil was not created by God, but rather came about as a punishment for humanity's sins. For many present-day evangelical Christians, philanthropy and volunteering offer a solution to the theological dilemma presented in C. S. Lewis's problem of pain: because God is good and all-powerful, he does not sit idly and allow suffering to happen. Rather, God calls on good people to intervene—to mitigate suffering and evil in the world. This response to the problem of pain—the conviction that one must act as God's agent and give on behalf of God—is imbued with the white-savior narrative as well as late-capitalist values, such as personal responsibility for others. In this regard, STM participants resemble the long-term missionaries studied by anthropologist Webb Keane (2007, 113), whom he characterizes as "endowed with a sense of heroic making of history, of precipitating events." In Chapter 3, I discussed the ways that STM participants aim to be Christ-like. Christ is the paragon of divine heroism, to be emulated by feeding the poor and healing the sick, perhaps saving their lives and,

more important, saving their souls through conversion. STM participants then return to their home churches as testament to the good of God in the world. Divine heroism is frequently invoked by evangelical social actors as their motivation for charitable giving.

STM participants such as Tara feel called by God to give and to serve. In response to the question of why she was chosen by God to live a relatively privileged life in the United States, rather than a far less comfortable life in a "Third World" country, Tara writes, "My life was spared on many occasions not for my sake but for service [to] God. I understood that better as we served the people in [the batey] in the name of Jesus Christ." Participants make sense of their own privileges by regarding them as part of God's purpose for them, stressing that God's plans are always for good. They commonly cite Romans 8:28, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." This verse promises that everything that happens is ultimately for good, but it also stipulates that all things work for good only for those who love God and "have been called according to his purpose." This argument implies that Tara and others from the United States, for whatever reason, have been blessed.

Through religious discourses like those described in Chapters 3 and 4, discourses describing divine heroism express ideas about moral subjectivity. In Chapter 3, I explained that the notion "blessed are the poor" frames the morality of Dominicans. Proverbs 19:17 mirrors that beatitude: "He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward him for what they have done." As I also explained in Chapter 3, the discourses that stem from these notions work in similar ways to frame both American and

local subjectivities, but have different effects. Dominicans are moral and "blessed" not by virtue of any moral action, but simply because they are poor. Americans, in contrast, are rewarded for their moral deeds even before they undertake them, as in the case of Tara, whose "life was spared…for service." According to some STM participants, Americans who show kindness to the poor are serving the Lord, for which they will be rewarded. These beliefs in conjunction with others, like those expressed in Tara's narrative in which God calls to her and tells her, "I've got work for you to do," imply a moral agency through which STM participants, having been called upon by God, act on behalf of God.

Both Panglossian egoism and divine heroism were expressed in various ways in the STM activities that I observed and in the materials that I collected. In the materials about their mission service that participants produced as well as in the religious media that they consumed, numerous expressions of these ideologies can be found. For instance, STM promotional materials that are used to recruit participants rely heavily on notions of divine heroism and serve as a mode of moral subjectivation. One promotional post on social media asks, "How many times have you wished you could make a difference? How often have you heard about the Dominican Project and wondered how you could help? [The STM] is your chance to create a mini-miracle and make it personal to you." This example underscores how STM organizers and participants construct themselves as agents for change that extends to the level of the divine ("miracle"). Moreover, the post through deictic phrases places the experiences of the STM participant central to the STM—"how you could help" or "your chance," and "personal to you"—reflecting many of the criticisms of STMs self-serving. Although some Americans who participate in

STMs may initially be confronted with a crisis of faith in which they must reconcile their belief in God with the injustices that they witness, the ways in which they do so—Panglossian egoism and divine heroism—ultimately reinforce, and may strengthen, their religious beliefs because they involve the construction of the self as engaging with God, learning moral lessons, and acting on his behalf.

In the previous chapters, I examined the ways that American participants make sense of global inequalities and the economic and racial injustice that they encounter during STMs. I proposed that American participants' interactions with Dominicans shape and are shaped by their previously existing, US-based understandings of race, poverty, and globalization. In this chapter, I examine the ways that Americans' approach to the poverty and racial discrimination that they witness during STMs shapes and is shaped by their ontological orientation to "evil" and to moral agency. Informed by their religious beliefs, their understandings of such evils as poverty and racial injustice shape their philanthropic practices; but these practices fail to address the root causes of these problems. STM participants' charitable-giving and volunteering practices will be examined in the next chapter. This chapter focuses on the religious ideologies that inform their understandings of personhood and moral agency and lead to their decisions to participate in STMs.

Volunteering and charitable giving have always been integral to the American social fabric; however, both have seen recent increases. Philanthropy currently constitutes about two percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). This recent increase in giving in the US reflects broader trends in late-capitalist societies, where responsibility

for mitigating the effects of economic inequality is increasingly located primarily in the individual. Scholars such as Bornstein (2005), Goode (2006), and Greenhouse (2012) have asserted that the ethical notion of "personal responsibility" for oneself (as described in Chapter 3) has been extended to include personal responsibility for others, as a means of making up for retrenchments in social services. Services such as healthcare, previously considered the responsibility of the state or of employers, have thus been moved into the domain of charity. Such changes reflect changing ideologies of agency and moral responsibility. Under the resultant forms of governance, social services are not considered a human right or something that one has earned through hard work. In many cases, an individual can access services only through the casual generosity of other individuals. In the US, this is seen, for example, in the increasing reliance on GoFundMe accounts to pay for much-needed medical care. Social services are not considered a human right, nor are they earned through work or taxes; they are accessible only if and when others generously decide to help one gain access to them, subject to whatever stipulations they might see fit to apply. This diminishes people, casting them as needy recipients of others' generosity. Conversely, those who are able to donate to a cause are cast as moral subjects, even heroes.

Scholars interested in capitalist and late-capitalist subject formation and moralities (e.g., Davidson 2011; Gill 2000; Muehlebach 2012) have explored the relationship between moral "freedoms," many of which entail heightened personal responsibility, and the dissolution of social institutions. Their work reveals a paradox of philanthropy: philanthropy is made both possible and necessary by policies that are a root

cause of the economic inequalities and social injustices that philanthropy ostensibly is intended to address. In the US, 73% of charitable giving goes to religious organizations, and the largest share of charitable donations come from members of conservative Christian groups (National Study of American Religious Giving 2013), who, regardless of their socioeconomic class, tend to support neoliberal economic policies such as deregulation and privatization. Scholars such as Elisha (2011) and Halperin (2009) have challenged narrow views of conservative Christians as individualistic by explaining the relationship between their religious beliefs and their preferred forms of civic engagement. Amid heightened efforts to dismantle and privatize social services, it has become increasingly important to understand why some conservative Christians prefer charitable giving, which provides temporary relief, over support for human rights and structural changes that could lead to longer-term solutions.

In the sections that follow, I examine the mechanisms through which STM participants come to be (re)formed as individual moral subjects, particularly the evangelical economic ideologies that manifest as giving behaviors. I elucidate evangelical charity and volunteering by examining the religious ideologies that are embedded in giving practices, so as to reveal the ways in which evangelicals understand the causes of, and solutions to, inequality. As outlined above, evangelical understandings of inequality are informed by conceptualizations of the self within Christian belief systems. STM participants mobilize the two interrelated ideologies that I described above: Panglossian egoism and divine heroism. These ideologies allow them to reconcile their beliefs in an omnipotent and benevolent God with the suffering and injustice that

they witness during STMs, and with their own position in the world as relatively privileged Americans. I examine how these ideologies emerge during STMs through various discursive practices and self-forming activities (Foucault 1997, 265) that serve to cultivate a particular moral subjectivity. I focus on two prominent discursive practices: the telling of personal narratives that represent and incite a call to moral action; and the use of religious language, including prayer, in which charitable giving is misrecognized as a form of moral and spiritual capital.

Language is one of the primary means by which moral subjectivity is (trans)formed, socialized, and performed. Because language is both culturally organized and organizing, the study of language can elucidate processes of cultural change and the transformation of moral subjectivity. Perhaps more important, linguistically mediated interaction is inherently moral and subject-forming. As verbal interaction is predicated on the mutual recognition of subjects, moral subjectivity is an underlying condition for interaction (Keane 2011, 168).

Religious contexts are especially revealing of how moral subjectivity emerges and is (re)produced. Religions typically outline moral codes that articulate a human subjectivity in relation to a cosmological order. In a religious context, this means that subjective experience can be extended beyond the individual subjectivity to a collective subjectivity, as well as to a subjectivity that brings an individual into relation with the divine. Linguistic anthropologists have demonstrated that religious contexts may be even more revealing of moral subjectivity than other contexts because religious observance involves a conscious stylization of language (Keane 1997a, 48). As this suggests, a

linguistic anthropological approach is useful for analyzing the ways in which concrete religious acts, such as prayer, socialize religious beliefs and dispositions that are embodied and (trans)form moral subjectivity.

Lambek (2010, 331) suggests that a linguistic anthropological, practice-based approach to morality "has the potential to go beyond the dialectics inherent in much of Western social theory, especially structure and action." Ethnographic research driven by two areas of inquiry within linguistic anthropology—language socialization and performance (ritual and narrative)—are especially revealing of the ways in which moral subjectivities emerge, are (re)produced, and are (trans)formed. I discuss these two areas of inquiry individually, but, as will be apparent, they are mutually integrative and also articulate with other relevant topics, including narrative and language ideology.

Narratives of Short-Term Missions as a Calling and as Religious Service

American STM participants cultivate a moral subjectivity as divine heroes through various discursive practices. Long-term and short-term missionaries alike tell narratives of their calling to serve as missionaries. As I explained in Chapter 2, STM participants try to distinguish themselves from other tourists and even from members of other STM teams, as more moral and righteous. The call to evangelize comes from Christ himself, in Bible verses that STM participants frequently reference, including Mark 16:15, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation," and Matthew 28:19–20, "Therefore go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Matthew 28:20 concludes, "I am with you always, to the very end of the age,"

reaffirming and legitimizing missionization as God’s will. In referencing these verses during their narrative tellings of their callings to serve as missionaries, participants perform a moral stance and constitute their moral subjectivities (Ochs 2004).

In their narratives of their “callings” to serve as missionaries, either short-term or long-term, American missionaries differentiate themselves from other tourists and legitimize their presence in the Dominican Republic as a religious duty sanctioned by God. Jason, praying over a mission team, calls on God to sanctify this status: “God, bless this team. They are not here for a vacation. They are here to serve you, to glorify you, and to bless others by doing your work.” Although Jason’s prayer is an entreaty to God, because it was stated out loud to the group, it is also performed to the mission team themselves, confirming their sense of self as moral agents chosen by God for this mission. Similarly, Ryan, a team leader, says to his group, “I feel called to do this. To serve God […] I love to go on vacation myself, but I’ve always wanted to do this.” Ryan’s speech, similar to Jason’s prayer, frames missions not as a personal choice, like a vacation, but as a calling from God to serve. By framing their participation in a mission as a divine calling, they deny some aspects of their own individual agency, presenting themselves as agents serving at God’s behest.

In calling narratives, American missionaries describe how they received and answered God’s call to leave their accustomed lives (on either a short-term or long-term basis) and to become missionaries, thus ascribing meaning to their decisions to do so. I situate these calling narratives in regard to two other types of narrative that have been described and examined by anthropologists of Christianity: born-again narratives

(Luhrmann 2004) and conversion narratives (Pearson 2009). In both of these, narrators construct specific events in their lives as forces that led them to become Christians. In her 2004 study of an evangelical church, Tanya Luhrmann argues that born-again Christians use narratives to understand their past lives and establish new identities. According to Pearson (2009), conversion stories are descriptions of individual transformation that often index cross-cultural encounters, such as missionization. In the mission field, these cross-cultural encounters are shaped by political and popular discourses of colonialism and development, such as those described in Chapter 3 of this dissertation. Narratives structure lives and construct past feelings into present experiences and potential futures (Capps and Ochs 1995:14). In this way, calling narratives can play a vital role for STM participants in their efforts to make sense of their experiences. In her analysis of conversion narratives, Stromberg (1993: xi) proposes that the process of self-transformation takes place during the narrative itself, making the performance central to the efficacy of the conversion. Through telling stories, STM participants moralize the events that they recount and seek to convince their audience to see some part of reality in a specific way. As an area of inquiry, narrative analysis is built on the assumption that the organization of personal narratives is shaped by culturally constructed interpretive frameworks (Garro and Mattingly 2000; Ochs 2004). Calling narratives are influenced by Bible stories and evangelical ideologies that demonstrate one's spiritual capital to the audience.

Calling narratives are often told as part of the fundraising activities, usually at church, through which a missionary seeks financial support for his or her service to God.

Calling narratives thus influence the shape and flow of international aid to missions. In narrating the way in which God called them to go on a mission trip, missionaries call on their audiences to dedicate their lives to God and to support the mission through financial means. STM participants frequently describe the ways that they were "given an opportunity" in passive voice. The motivation to go on a short-term mission is presented not as a personal desire (which might be interpreted as a selfish desire to go on a kind of vacation), but as coming directly from God. As Joe wrote in his annual report to his mission donors, "God burdened our heart for the children [in the Dominican Republic], developed a passion within us to make a difference and then gave us the vision for Making a Difference. So, we heard God's calling for us and chose to be obedient." According to another participant, "We have a great understanding of what God has called us to do, and we are just being faithful to what he has laid on our hearts." Others commonly use such phrases as "God was working in our hearts" and "God gave me a vision." Describing their decision to go on an STM as a calling or blessing from a higher power frames their participation as a moral obligation or duty rather than a personal choice.

In the calling narrative, God is present in each step of the process. Beyond describing being called by God, participants also describe the ways that God has "orchestrated" their mission trips, further legitimizing their calls for financial assistance. Participants frequently recount how they were "sent" by God to their STM leaders, thus offering further proof that they are undertaking this mission because it has been ordained and blessed by God. Kelsey, a graduate student, described to me how God "orchestrated"

her being assigned to teach an extra college class that summer so that she could earn enough money to pay for her short-term mission. Panglossian egoism and divine heroism are both evident here in the ways that participants' paths to STMs are narrated as predestined opportunities both to learn from others' suffering and to relieve that suffering.

In addition to financial assistance, participants solicit prayers from donors as well as from those who may not be able to donate. These prayer requests underscore the significance of their trips as part of God's plan. Such requests, moreover, emphasize the spiritual significance of the trip over the need for financial support. In this regard, some STM organizers make clear why they do not personally seek out donations for their missions. Joe explained to me that, aside from one fundraising dinner that he holds annually, he does not solicit donations for his mission because it makes him feel uncomfortable to ask people for money. These methods distance him from asking for money and instead emphasize taking personal responsibility. By inviting prayers and narrating their work as their response to a calling from God, participants who do seek donations align their requests with the established Christian giving practice of tithing.

In fundraising for their missions and trying to recruit STM participants, long-term missionaries likewise narrate their callings to the mission field. In doing so, they articulate the ways that their participation in STMs was "life-changing," setting them on a moral path. Long-term missionaries typically start their narratives by drawing a distinction between how they conceptualized their lives before and after being introduced

to the mission field. For example, Chelsea frames herself before her "calling" as having been in a stage of existential discovery:

> I had done like short-term missions and so that caught my attention but I really felt like God was calling me to move, but I was also like really, really scared to do it, so it's kind of like this journey of just like where I'm exploring like what my options were, and also just really like me asking myself like "What is my purpose in this world and like what impact do I want to have and then in what ways do I want to have that impact."

Similarly, Jason constructs his calling narrative partly as a coming-of-age story, thus connecting with the young high-school and college-aged students in his audience, who likewise are in a liminal life stage in regard to their church participation and career paths. In narrating his calling, Jason presents missions as an opportunity for youths to explore possibilities that enable them to maintain their religious commitments through their vocation.

> Well, my story how I became a missionary really started when I was in high school. I was a junior in high school and just like many juniors you start thinking maybe I was a little late bloomer I don't know, but my junior year you start thinking of you know what you're going to do with your life…So I went on the mission trip and while I was there in England and even though it was in English, which was probably good for me, uh, I just saw a whole lot of ways, talents I thought God had given me and God was preparing me and just really thought that this might really be something.

Although the calling is significant, it does not end after the person who receives it decides to go on a mission; the journey involves many further challenges. In calling narratives, missionaries represent their personal "tests of faith," which take inspiration from Biblical stories of people overcoming their situations by being faithful to and relying on God. These tests of faith are a form spiritual capital, demonstrating divine

action in STMs. Referring to a summer mission internship he completed in Brazil during college, Jason explains,

> I really think that trip, a trip like that can make you or break you. Because easily I could've come back from that trip and say, ok that was awful and I'm not doing this anymore, but really, I did the opposite, and I said if I can make it through this trip with just me and God because I really felt like God just lifted me up the whole trip I just felt like God was right with me. It was just a wonderful three months with me and God. You know? He was just so faithful to me. That trip really just confirmed ok this is, this is what I'm supposed to be doing.

Jason describes God's testing him to see whether he can survive the demands of missionary life. In doing so, he indirectly draws parallels between his time as a short-term missionary and the story of Jesus's being tempted in the desert. Jason initially presents the trip as something "that can make you or break you" and "awful," to present his moral position. His ability to allow God to lift him up and to be with him demonstrates Jason's strength and capabilities as a missionary, thereby building the audience's confidence in his mission. Jason emphasizes the moral lessons to be learned and his own abilities as a teacher after having been receptive to, and having learned, those lessons. His narrative teaches his audience the moral lesson that, although they may face difficulty in answering God's call, if they rely on and serve God, they too will be "lifted up." In his conclusion, Jason connects his past experiences to his present work as a missionary. The members of his audience are thus presented with a potential future that they can actualize for themselves through their own personal faith and service to the mission. Jason's testimony of overcoming challenges through his faith legitimizes his work as a true missionary, one

who knows that God called him. His narrative affirms his faith in God and promotes the idea that his Christian audience should have faith in him to be a good missionary.

Calling narratives portray God as an agent in the mission, and missionaries narrate the challenges of mission work through stories that parallel or directly draw on Bible stories. In describing how they overcame challenges through God, they portray their mission as legitimized by God. This legitimization is crucial to their "calls" for support from their audiences. In each part of their narratives, missionaries subordinate their own agency to God's. This is done directly, by explicitly stating God's role in the process, as well as less directly, by means of syntactic formulations that situate God as the prime actor in their lives. For example, Chelsea explains,

> I just felt that God was telling me like "I'm calling you to go"; like they talked about like how Jonah hid from what God was telling him what to do, and how we all often like don't do what we're—God is calling us to do because we're afraid. And that was very true, that like I stayed home from college for a year because I was afraid.

Chelsea directly references the biblical story of Jonah, which is well known to her audience. In doing so, she attributes voice to God. Her narrative, like Tara's that opens this chapter, switches from her own first-person account to voicing God's call in the first person ("I'm calling you to go"). According to Bakhtin, subjectivity is constituted through the choice and organization of "voices," which creates a principal moral axis of the narrative (Hill 1995, 109). Luhrmann found that, in telling "born-again" narratives, speakers used stylized embodied and verbal practices as means of indexing their social identities before and after they were "born again," and in order to claim moral positions. Chelsea's narrative serves as a lesson that she was wrong in not answering God's call

right away. Drawing on a biblical story of a person who was punished for his lack of faith, Chelsea urges her Christian audience to heed God's call. Her narrative also underscores the urgency of being called and the importance of responding immediately and without fear.

The importance of listening and acting when called is especially salient here; it is presented as more moral than inaction, faithlessness, or fear. In recounting their own callings to missionary work that occurred in the past, missionaries are calling on their audiences in the present—calling on them to sign up for an STM or to donate to a mission. If their audience members answer the call, they create potential futures for the mission through their financial support or through their own personal relationships with God. By listening to the calling narrative and, even more so, by donating to the mission afterward, audience members can indirectly experience a sense of divine heroism.

The notion of "service," an idealized moral behavior among evangelicals, is reflected in calling narratives. Service, for evangelicals, is any act that shows God's love, such as acts of evangelization, philanthropy, and fellowship. Service helps others, but it is also, and ultimately, meant for God. In a sermon for Dominicans that was translated into Spanish by an interpreter, Joe explains, "One of the greatest rewards that we ever receive for serving God is the permission to do still more for Him." Such assertions highlight the message that STM volunteers do not go on mission trips for themselves; although they may benefit from the mission, such as through self-reflection, personal growth, or fellowship as a group, they are on the mission primarily to glorify God. Participants discuss how they "are looking to connect and shine for Jesus for people," representing

themselves as a light. Divine heroism is also implied in the ways in which STM participation is framed as service. One participant asserted, “God’s work is obvious in Joe’s ministry, and His will is being done in his family.” In such ways, participants legitimize mission activities by presenting them as divinely inspired and characterizing the work involved as sacred.

All Christians, regardless of race, class, or national background, can serve God, and Dominicans are similarly called to divine action by means of these discursive strategies. For example, Jason described to a visiting team how local pastors were “moved” by God to partner with his mission. Local people refer to “serving God” or “serving others” to describe their own participation in the church. American participants praise local volunteers for their service alongside the mission team in helping their own communities. In another speech, Joe called upon the youths in the Dominican congregation “to discover their spiritual gift and then decide how they can use their gift to serve God and to make a difference in the lives of the people around them.” Recall Jason’s critique of the Haitian-Dominican Pastor John Robert (described in Chapter 4), whom Jason perceived as unwilling to serve: “First we are servants […] It’s not “moreno” work, no, it’s, work because you are with us.” For many Christians, Jason’s remarks cite an important principle of Christianity. Service requires humbling oneself and can therefore be an equalizing force. Through service, Christians around the world can be united, without hierarchy or power differentials. This ideal is especially salient in the context of STM encounters, in which local and foreign participants hold unequal status and power.

From calling narratives to sermons, discourses of service are widespread in Christianity. Within evangelicalism, STM discourses of service present STM participation as a way of following Jesus's example and leading a Christ-like life, as when STM leader Ryan told me, "Jesus is the greatest example of service to others. If people are called to serve on a mission, I will come [with them] any time." Such discourses often involve references to the Bible. The great majority of these are references to Jesus; for example, I heard STM participants quote a passage from a sermon given by Jesus in Matthew 20:26–28 and Mark 10:43–45: "Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Participants more often quoted or referred to the latter of these two sentences than the former, but the whole passage is relevant here, as it can be construed as privileging those who serve over those who are served. In Chapter 3, I explored discourses about the poor, in which poverty is regarded as a virtue. I proposed that these discourses present poor Dominicans as "blessed" not by virtue of their own actions, but simply by virtue of being poor. Americans, in contrast, are called by God to serve and are moral agents by virtue of their actions, which are in part a result of economic privilege.

The use of the line "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" in narratives by STM participants is an intriguing role reversal in the context of the Dominican Republic. As tourism has rapidly expanded in recent years, the Dominican Republic's formerly agricultural economy has been

transformed into a service economy in which Dominicans and Haitian-Dominicans serve mostly white American and European tourists at resorts, cleaning their rooms and serving them cocktails. STMs and other alternative forms of tourism, with their emphasis on service, have the potential to subvert these hierarchical service roles. Volunteer-tourism organizations' reframing of trips as "service learning" prioritizes the ways in which volunteers may benefit and learn from the experience while highlighting the importance of "service" (conceptualized as it is in STM discourses). As discussed in Chapter 3, the sight of Americans performing physical labor and serving Dominicans and Haitian-Dominicans during STMs can be a powerful image for local people, who are impressed by Americans' willingness to work and to serve others rather than to be served.

STMs present opportunities for disrupting and even subverting conventional notions of who serves whom, but pre-existing roles and the unequal statuses associated with them can also be reinforced by STM practices. Most of the groups that I observed stayed in houses or compounds that were owned by the long-term mission and were designed to house STM participants. However, many STM participants stay at internationally owned hotels and resorts that are oriented toward more traditional foreign tourists and are staffed by local people. According to Joe, "It's not really a mission trip if you stay at a resort. We're on a mission. Not a vacation." The sentiment behind this statement reflects the STM ideals of sacrifice and serving others over being served. Largely if not entirely ignored, though, is a glaring issue: staying at a resort runs counter to the goals of STM participation. In some ways, by staying at resorts, service-learning groups are actually contributing to the need for the aid that they aim to provide.

Employees at resorts, especially low-level workers such as members of the grounds crew and cleaning staff, work long hours, get very little time off, and are paid very little. The members of one medical-mission team that I observed, who visited the country annually, always staying at a resort, became aware of the resort staff's needs only after some of the workers privately inquired whether they could get help from the visiting American doctors. After learning about resort workers' great need for medical care, the team arranged with the resort to hold a medical clinic for the resort staff after finishing their clinics in the bateyes.

A related consideration is that the exclusivity of resorts conflicts with ideals of service and fellowship. In order for local people to gain entrance to the grounds of a resort, they may be required to provide advance notice and to show a passport. Even then, they may still face discrimination. Americans, as privileged bearers of passports that allow them to travel almost anywhere in the world, are unaware of the everyday challenges that Dominicans face, even in their own country. When local STM workers arrive at a resort to begin the day's work with Americans, or when American teams invite them to dine at the resort in celebration of the end of the mission, the workers are often barred from entering if they cannot produce the required documents; or they simply are not allowed to enter, especially if they are Haitian. Americans sometimes become aware of this discriminatory treatment and protest it, sometimes successfully. On the whole, though, resorts are racially and socioeconomically discriminatory domains into which local people are granted entrance only as workers.

This broader context of the Dominican Republic's service economy makes the idea of religious service especially powerful to local people, in that it involves a switching of the roles that typify touristic encounters between Americans and Dominicans. The role reversal that occurs during STMs is a frequent topic of STM discourses and reflects a biblical example of service to which American and Dominican participants alike often refer: the scene described in John 13, in which Jesus washes the feet of his disciples. From a sermon by Pastor Francisco:

> Dios nos ha llamado a servir. Servir a los demás como lo hizo Jesús. Pero en el mundo, a veces otros sirven a otros para servirse a sí mismos. Pero los cristianos son diferentes en su servicio a los demás. Como Jesús en Juan 13 dice a sus discípulos: "Como yo he hecho, deben hacer, servir a los demás y lavarse los pies unos a otros." Esa es la grandeza del evangelismo. Grandeza es rebajarnos, humildad.
>
> God has called us to serve. To serve others like Jesus did. But in the world, sometimes others serve others to serve themselves. But Christians are different in their service to others. Like Jesus in John 13 says to his disciples, "Like I have done, you need to do, serve others and wash each other's feet." That is the greatness of evangelism. Greatness is lowering ourselves, humility.

In washing his disciples' feet, Jesus must lower his body physically, as STM participants will do in performing service-oriented tasks or manual labor during mission work. In lowering themselves through physical work and service, participants orient their bodies to express humility. This lowering also symbolically rejects the conventional status hierarchy. As described in Chapter 3, STM participants emulate Christ's actions in order to cultivate a moral subjectivity as a disciple Christ. Like Jesus washing his disciples' feet, Americans on STMs feed and care for Dominicans, who, in all other contexts, feed and care for Americans through their labor in the sugar and tourism industries. Notably,

in Pastor Francisco's sermon on John 13, Christian service is set above all other types of service; it is "selfless." By framing it as a calling, one that requires humility, participants can deflect accusations that their STM participation is self-serving or vacation-like. This is also seen in the ways that STM participants try to differentiate themselves from other tourists and even other STM volunteers, as discussed in Chapter 2. Significantly, they differentiate themselves from those *other* mission groups who might fall into white-savior behaviors.

Through STM discourses, participants narrate how they are called by God, who orchestrates their participation in an STM, through which they can learn from the struggles of others. They then frame their participation as "service," comparing it to Christ-like behaviors outlined in the Bible. In one further step, which I describe below, participants use religious language to portray themselves as speaking and acting on God's behalf. In these ways, STM discourses progressively shape the moral subjectivation of American participants—from their being called by God, to serving God, to speaking and acting in a sort of union with God as divine heroes.

Religious Language

I conclude this chapter with a brief examination of religious language, focusing on particular evangelical rhetorical strategies that are often used in the STM discourses that I described above. STM participants believe that, in the evangelical speech event that I call the "oratorical union," a speaker's words transcend the individual and are transformed into, or are aligned with, God's words.

An oratorical union is a performance that unites the speaker's voice with the voice of the divine. It usually occurs at or near the beginning of a group prayer. One speaker, typically an ordained church leader or a prominent lay member of the congregation, prays to God, speaking on behalf of the group and asking that his or her words be God's words. Such phrases as "Let your words speak through me," "Let my words be yours," and "I ask that you use me as your voice" elevate the speaker's words and the moral weight behind them. The extent to which participants in such prayer events believe in this merging of a human voice with God's voice varies. Among my research participants, the general consensus is that a union between the speaker and God occurs by way of the Holy Spirit. In her research on contemporary evangelical Christianity in the US, Luhrmann (2012) similarly found that her Christian research participants referred to the Holy Spirit as a conduit. They believed that God was present in their everyday lives, and that God's power is "immediately accessible" to them (Luhrmann 2012, xix). STM participants do not view oratorical unions as spirit possession, nor are they a matter of speaking or interpreting tongues, which they mostly characterize more negatively. But neither is it a mere formality. Oratorical unions mediated by the Holy Spirit are described by evangelicals as a spiritual or charismatic gift, one that is legitimized by scripture, particularly 1 Corinthians 12:8–28. My research participants cited several prominent examples from religious texts. One is Matthew 10:19–20, in which Jesus sends his apostles to be his witness in Israel, saying "Do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you." Others include 2 Samuel 23:2, describing David's

last words: "The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me; his word was on my tongue"; and 2 Peter 1:21, which explains how prophecy "never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." In these examples, chosen believers, such as prophets and apostles, are transformed into vocal instruments of God, which legitimizes their speech as divine and is the prime source of their power in Christian tradition.

In these regards, oratorical unions are similar to other manifestations of Christian ideologies of language, such as the practice of treating God as an interlocutor in prayer and the experience of God talking to one, calling one, or commanding one to do something, as discussed earlier in this chapter. My use of the term "oratorical union" is intended to highlight the similarities. The word *oratorical* derives from the Latin verb *orare*, meaning to pray, beg, or beseech; the English word refers to the art of public speaking, comprising both prayer and non-prayer forms of public speech. The word *union* alludes to the sacramental union, the Protestant counterpart of the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. In oratorical unions, speakers, like the bread and wine in a sacramental union, do not *become* Christ, but rather are *united* with Christ in speech and, by extension, are potentially united in affect and intent as well.

Performances of religious language such as oratorical unions occur in various contexts, but they take on a special salience during STMs. In the anthropological literature on culture change as a consequence of missionization, contact brings about an immense variety of experiences, including heightened awareness of one's own culture and language being only one among others. During STMs, the participants in the cross-

cultural encounter are unlikely to share a language, and speech is inconsistently translated. If the participants in the encounter are all Christians, they may not share a language, but they do have, to some extent, a common basis for orienting themselves "verbally, perceptually, and physically to each other and the social world" (Hanks 1996:229). They are able to communicate by assuming a shared frame of reference, which they share as part of a broader Christian ideology of language.

Figure 9: Led by a Dominican pastor, an American youth group prays over a Dominican woman.

Depending on the context how it's an interpreted by its audience, an oratorical union can effectively ratify the speaker as speaking for God, and thus consecrate what is said as divinely ordained. In order to communicate successfully across languages in contact situations, participants in an interaction must share understanding of the rules of, including matters of participant roles, what counts as an utterance, and how particular kinds of utterances are to be interpreted and evaluated. Oratorical unions occur during group prayer. Although the speaker is ostensibly praying to God, asking God to speak through him, the other persons present are also the intended audience. Because the

speaker is seen as potentially united in voice with God, the union constitutes the speaker as a moral agent and the speaker's words as moral.

After the speaker's supplication to God to use his voice, there may be ambiguity as to when the union has ended, as there is no explicitly marked endpoint. Whatever ambiguities result from oratorical unions are of less significance, however, than the message that was transmitted. The speaker, like Bakhtin's (1981) novelist, must bring together multiple different voices (for instance, his own voice, biblical texts, and institutional discourses), consciously organizing them and shaping the resultant discourse by combining them into a higher unity (Bakhtin 1981:262), which is construed as God's words. The voicing that occurs during an oratorical union thus involves claiming a moral position among multiple, potentially conflicting, ways of speaking (Hill 1995:98). Oratorical union erases some aspects of the speaker's agency and attributes his or her words to divine agency.

Language use is a form of social action; as speech-act theory emphasizes, speakers do things with words (Garrett and Schieffelin 2011:3). Christian ideologies of language acknowledge this as well, albeit in different ways and for different reasons. One of the opening lines of the Bible, Genesis 1:3, describes a speech act (a divine one of cosmic proportions): "And God said, 'Let there be light.' And there was light." According to Bauman (1983), among Protestant groups, speaking became a form of human action. The notion of oratorical union involves believing that the word of God is moving the words of the individual person and that God's words can be accessed without mediation (Bauman 1983). Invoking oratorical union by *saying* "Use my voice" results in

just that: God is then considered to be influencing or “moving” the speech and actions of the speaker, which enables the speaker to distance himself from his own personal agency—and from acts of harm or symbolic violence, as I will consider in Chapter 6. As Austin (1962:25) points out in his model of ceremonial speech acts, certain “felicity conditions” must be in place in order for a speech act to be “felicitous”—that is, successful and valid, and recognized as such by those concerned. As this suggests, the power of an oratorical union lies not in a literal union with God, but in group members’ belief in, and recognition of, such a union. Unequal social statuses within the group influence who is and is not considered eligible to engage in oratorical union, and who will and will not be recognized as successfully doing so. This, in turn, has implications for power relations.

The performance of oratorical union allows for, and in fact encourages, individual agency. In order to perform an oratorical union, a person must possess specialized knowledge of how to voice God’s words. Generally, in order for an oratorical union to be recognized as such, the voicing individual must be a sanctioned member of the church, either someone who is officially ordained by the church, such as a pastor or missionary, or a validated member of the laity. (American laypersons who are participating in an STM are regarded as missionaries.) Joe commented on how he was chosen by God to fulfill God’s will, saying, “I am so thankful that God continues to use us and considers us trustworthy to carry out His purposes through Starfish. What a privilege it has been to be used by God in this way.” In this comment, Joe legitimizes his speech as well as his mission by framing their work as a “privilege” bestowed on them by God because they

are “trustworthy.” Saying that he and the mission that he leads are “used by God” rather than merely called by God further solidifies Joe’s role as a divine agent. In any instance of speech, there is negotiation between the speaker and the audience (Voloshinov 1986). In the case of oratorical unity, however, God’s voice is united with that of a ratified speaker, making it quite difficult for others, especially local people, to negotiate (much less resist) what is being said and done. Although Joe gives local people a good deal of power, such as the opportunity to select which children from the church will receive his mission’s aid, he still holds the power to determine how the funds are spent. As the STM leader in charge who has been given a “vision” for the mission from God, Joe chooses to spend the majority of the funds on purchasing school uniforms, even though local leaders have earnestly demonstrated the need for funding of college scholarships.

Notwithstanding folk ideas and even some social-science definitions that portray moral subjectivity as a kind of “inner self,” moral subjectivity is a performative practice that is externally expressed and constituted. Through the performance of religious language, a new subject emerges, as in the case of Joe, who is being “used by God.” One year, I asked Joe what he was planning to talk about in his upcoming speech to the church. He replied that he was still unsure what he would say, because God had not yet given him the words. In their performances of oratorical unions, missionaries and others speak and act in union with God. Whether this union concludes along with the religious speech event is an ambiguous matter. There is some indication that, through interdiscursivity, or discursive continuity across speech events (Faudree 2009), this union of human and divine voices may be extended in some ways to include mundane events as

well, particularly if those events take place within the context of the mission field. STM participants often call upon God to act through them, as in Joe's reference to God's "using" him. In contexts of group prayer, utterances such as "I ask that you move through me," "Use my hands and my feet to do your will," and "Let us be your hands and your feet, Lord" are commonly heard. Such formulations express the desire to embody Christ or God's will, as when an STM participant prayed, "Let us serve you and be your instruments so that you can work your will through us." By invoking God's will as manifested through their own actions, participants are (trans)formed into divine heroes. At the same time, they present themselves as humble vessels to be used for the glory of God. These discursive strategies reflect their divine-hero solution to the problem of pain: God created good people (themselves) to work against evil and to relieve suffering on God's behalf.

As was explained above, calling narratives are often told during fundraising events prior to an STM. After the STM, participants often share other kinds of narratives with the people back home who had donated money or prayed for them. Post-STM narratives highlight the ways that God has changed them through service. For instance, Amy comments on what can be achieved if one is open to, and accepting of, God's will:

> God continually showed us that He is able to do immeasurable [sic] more than all we ask or imagine. [The teams] experienced firsthand just how powerful our Lord and Savior is and just how much He can accomplish if we surrender to Him.

By answering God's call and surrendering to him through participation in the STM, American participants' faith in God is strengthened. In order to be faithful, Christians

must surrender themselves—their minds and their bodies—to God's will. As STM participants, they are also able to learn about themselves and what they can accomplish through God if they are open to his using them. Laura describes to her post-STM audience the strength that God gave her:

> God taught me many things this week. He gave me courage to do things I didn't think I could do. He gave me the strength to do physically tough jobs. He kept me safe and healthy. He reminded me I don't have to change the world, but to start with loving one person and serving right where I am. He showed me the danger of becoming indifferent and comfortable in my life. I saw the joy and contentment these people have in spite of their simplistic lives. I am learning, daily, to see things as God sees them, to love people as He would, to live each day to the fullest, and give God the only thing I have to give— myself and my dreams.

Laura's narrative indicates some of the ways in which, and the extent to which, ritual transformations extend beyond the ritual event itself. Participation in the STM transformed Laura's sense of self and her everyday ways of being.

As this suggests, STM participants' use of religious language and their narratives express Panglossian egoism and divine heroism. During an STM, participants may develop a heightened awareness of difference and inequality, which may give rise to a crisis of faith and reflection on the problem of pain. After the STM, though, participants tend to focus less on why it was necessary for them to act, trying to relieve severe suffering in the lives of others, and focus more on the ways that God intervened in their own lives, which led to their transformation from being "indifferent" and too "comfortable." Luhrmann (2012, xv) describes what she considers the defining feature of American evangelicals: their belief in an "intensely personal" God whose presence can be experienced in concrete ways, such as by hearing his voice and feeling his hands, and

who cares about their welfare. In professing her blessings, such as the lessons, courage, safety, and strength that she received from God, Laura and other American STM participants seemingly overlook the vast inequality between God's interventions into their own lives and his more indirect interventions into the lives of poor Dominicans, who are far more vulnerable and have much greater material needs.

Conclusion

American evangelicals' religious ideologies shape and are shaped by their economic ideologies. In particular, their orientations to evil, the divine, and agency shape the ways in which they conceptualize systemic global inequality, including its causes and potential ways of addressing it. American evangelicals largely prefer donating or volunteering, positioning themselves as divine heroes who are destined to help mitigate the suffering of others. However, these methods only provide temporary relief and thus contribute to a cycle of poverty, necessitating future STMs. And indeed, many STM groups send teams annually; some teams that I observed had been working with the same impoverished communities for decades without seeing any real substantive change, such as increased household incomes, improved housing, or better access to healthcare. Despite these shortcomings of charity, American evangelicals are less inclined to try to end suffering through other means, such as advocacy, that potentially could lead to longer-term solutions.

Evangelicals' chosen solutions to the problem of evil, Panglossian egoism and divine heroism, are subject to the critique of the white-savior complex in mission work and volunteer tourism that was discussed in Chapters 1 and 4. Mostly white Christians

are said to be chosen by God to work against evil and to relieve suffering, particularly in parts of the world that were colonized and made dependent by the white Christians who preceded them. During STMs, many American participants, usually guided by local STM organizers, vocalize support for undocumented immigrants, anti-racism, and human and labor rights such as minimum wage, unionization, and universal healthcare. But their methods for alleviating poverty in foreign countries, and the political causes that they espouse back home, work against these ideals. Their understandings of poverty, agency, and change are reflected in STM rhetoric such as "You can help change a life that may change the world," which emphasizes individual agency and ignores the necessity of change at macro levels. The discourses that I observed STM participants producing are comparable to the faith-based-NGO discourses observed in Zimbabwe by Bornstein (2005, 5), who proposes that the "construction of individuals in relation to the divine […] parallels neoliberal assumptions of individual choice that underlie the discourse of a free market." As this suggests, notions of moral subjectivity and agency that that derive from economic ideologies and religious ideologies become intertwined. The discursive practices through which these ideologically intertwined notions are realized (re)form STM participants on both sides of the encounter as givers and receivers, thus differentiating them and increasing the social distance between them.

In the following chapter, I examine American STM participants' actions against these "evils." In what ways do they act, and how do their actions address systemic poverty? How does the late-capitalist notion of "personal responsibility for others" lend

itself to resolving the paradoxes of philanthropy, and how, ultimately, does it limit the possibilities for action against inequality and injustice?

CHAPTER 6

GOOD (INTENTIONS) AND EVIL – ACCOUNTABILITY, AGENCY, AND ACTION IN STMS

The banality of evil transmutes into the banality of sentimentality. The world is nothing but a problem to be solved by enthusiasm.

I deeply respect American sentimentality, the way one respects a wounded hippo. You must keep an eye on it, for you know it is deadly. – Teju Cole (2012)

Good and Evil in STMs

In the last chapter, I demonstrated how participants construe the suffering of others (the problem of evil) as a moral lesson from God (Panglossian egoism) and a charge to reduce that suffering through charitable giving and volunteer work (divine heroism). In construing global socioeconomic issues as matters of personal religious revelation, American evangelicals' ontological orientation to evil mystifies the ways in which they are historically and materially connected to Dominicans, such as through former military occupation(s) and present-day tourism, and trade. Evangelical conceptualizations of moral agency, which reflect late-capitalist trends that emphasize the individual's personal responsibility for self as well as others, further obscure the paradox of philanthropy: the ability to give is made possible by policies that cause gross economic inequality, and hence the very conditions that the giving is meant to alleviate. Together, these intersecting, mutually reinforcing conceptualizations and orientations structure participants' understandings of poverty in ways that limit their awareness of, and

attention to, the need for structural-level changes to the socioeconomic systems that create and reproduce the conditions that they see before them. These limited and limiting understandings, in turn, direct their gaze and shape their giving practices, leading them to favor surface-level approaches that address only the most visible aspects of poverty.

Because the problem of evil and divine heroism motivates STM participants and shape the giving practices under consideration here, I deconstruct them and consider their base components: notions of good and evil. Given the ubiquity of good and evil as themes in Christianity, this consideration cannot be an exhaustive one, but only a brief overview of the ontology and metaphysics of good and evil, with attention to the ways in which these notions intersect with notions of personal agency and intentionality in the context of STMs. How do participants define good and evil? What do they believe causes evil, and what does it mean to them to be good or to do good? How do they conceptualize the ways in which good and evil intersect with intention, action, and outcome?

Common among many evangelicals is an understanding of human suffering as caused by the devil, an agentive figure. Although the rise of secularism in the US in the late 20th century led to a generalized cultural conceptualization of the devil as a metaphor for evil, the idea of a personal devil persists among some Christian groups today. Belief in a personal devil, especially as a counterpoint to a personal God (as highlighted in Chapter 5), was expressed by many of my American and Dominican participants. Evil is conceptualized as external and cosmological in origin, rather than as sociological, though it manifests in sociological forms such as poverty. The notion that evil originates in activities of the devil tends to erase human agency and accountability. Within STM

discourses, the devil and demonic possession are frequent sermon topics that emphasize the power of Jesus to overcome the evils that infiltrate human lives. Among STM participants, demonic possession is often discussed when reconciling humans and their evil acts. For example, during my research in 2016 and 2017, demonic possession was a commonly given explanation of the mass shootings in Orlando and Las Vegas. This reflects the ideas of such prominent Christian thinkers as philosopher L. Gordon Graham, who argues that the traditional Christian model of the spiritual forces of good and evil provides a framework for understanding human wickedness, which cannot fully be explained in terms of humanistic and scientific principles (Oldridge 2012, 93). Such notions of a devil who is powerful enough to prevail over human will mitigate or absolve, and may even erase, human responsibility for atrocities, thus obscuring the social forces and human agency behind evil. Consider in this regard an example from Chapter 4: Kelsey glosses over the capture, transport, and enslavement of African people, musing that God arranged for them to live in hot climates such as that of the Caribbean because their bodies, particularly their skin and hair, are suited to it. Such ideas inhibit critical examination of the beliefs, peoples, institutions, and structures of power that enable or actively create suffering—and virtually preclude consideration of the ways that religion has been used to justify such evils as slavery. Due in part to their privileged position as beneficiaries of centuries of colonialism, it is much easier for American evangelicals to accept the existence of a devil doing evil, or manipulating people to do evil, than it is for them to accept that their own everyday actions, and the economic, geopolitical, and other systems that make their way of life possible, are destructive of others' lives.

Many American STM participants believe that suffering in the Dominican Republic is the result of the devil's actions, which affect people and events. Although they do not completely ignore the country's colonial history and such current problems as lack of economic opportunity and abuses of labor rights, neither do they acknowledge or focus on them; most participants have, at best, only a vague understanding of such matters. They consider the devil to be responsible for poverty and suffering in the country, with institutions and other actors serving as mere conduits for evil. To whatever extent they acknowledge their fellow Americans' role, they typically regard them as unwilling victims of the devil who originally had "good intentions." In contrast, local people are regarded as more voluntary conduits because of their perceived susceptibility to evil due to their race, class, and/or religious background.

The fact that the Dominican Republic's neighbor, Haiti, is the poorest country in the Western hemisphere is evidence, for some evangelicals, of the strong presence of the devil in that country. The successive tragedies that have befallen Haiti, including the devastating 2010 earthquake, are described by some American Christians as a punishment from God for Haitians' practicing of Vodou, a widely misunderstood syncretic religion that they consider to be akin to devil worship. According to Andrea, a missionary whose parents ran an orphanage in Haiti, Vodou represents the presence of "spiritual demonic things" in Haiti. She described the country as "a dark place." As I discussed in Chapter 4, for many STM participants, Haiti represents the greatest economic *and* spiritual need. It is not a coincidence that participants link these two needs, for many posit a causal relationship between economics and spirituality—and, by

extension, morality. Haiti's history either is not known or is disregarded as a cause of its present-day problems. Many evangelicals I worked with blame Haitians for the corruption in their country and consider the disasters that periodically devastate Haiti to be divine punishment for the practice of Vodou. For instance, days after the devastating earthquake that destroyed much of Haiti's infrastructure in 2010, and killed more than 200,000 people and left over one million more homeless, American televangelist Pat Robertson remarked[22] that Haitians had sworn a pact with the devil. Louis (2015, 5) argues that according to Robertson, "It was this supposed 'pact with the Devil' that…laid the foundations for the tragedy of the earthquake." Robertson's comments, made on the 700 Club, the Christian Broadcasting Network's flagship show that he anchors reaches over one billion households world-wide. This widespread reach is reflected in the similar comments made by my American and Dominican participants during my research about the more recent hurricanes.

In contrast, STM participants afford the benefit of the doubt to American missionaries who take advantage of great humanitarian need in the wake of these disasters. After the 2010 earthquake, several American Christian groups, exploiting lax

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[22] Pat Robertson's comments in full: "Something happened a long time ago in Haiti, and people might not want to talk about it. They were under the heel of the French. You know, Napoleon III and whatever. And they got together and swore a pact to the devil. They said, 'We will serve you if you will get us free from the French.' True story. And so, the devil said, 'OK, it's a deal.' And they kicked the French out. You know, the Haitians revolted and got themselves free. But ever since, they have been cursed by one thing after the other. Desperately poor. That island of Hispaniola is one island. It's cut down the middle. On the one side is Haiti; on the other side is the Dominican Republic. Dominican Republic is prosperous, healthy, full of resorts, et cetera. Haiti is in desperate poverty. Same island" (NPR 2010).

adoption laws, separated hundreds of Haitian children, many of whom were not orphaned, from their biological families. Many of these children were placed into homes that had not been screened according to protocol. One American Baptist organization, the New Life's Children Refuge (NLCR), was charged with human trafficking, but all but one of the members involved were released; the one member to face trial was sentenced to time served on reduced charges of arranging irregular travel. US media discourses on the subject mostly maintained that groups such as NLCR had not committed any wrong-doing and emphasized the importance of their intentions. At the end of one 2010 CBS report on NLCR, readers are asked, "What do you think? Should the Baptist group be viewed as saviors or kidnappers?" In the 2010 *New York Times* article "After Haiti Quake, the Chaos of U.S. Adoptions," author Ginger Thompson states, "There is no evidence to suggest that the evacuations were driven by anything other than the best of intentions." She goes on to describe the children's new circumstances:

> Many now live in the kind of quiet, scenic towns depicted in Norman Rockwell paintings. They are enrolled in school for the first time. They have grown inches, gotten eyeglasses and had their cavities filled. And they are learning what it feels like to have a mother and father wake them up every morning and tuck them into bed every night.

The author's ethnocentric account deliberately contrasts a traditional, idealized (white) American way of life with an unspoken, imagined Haitian one. Significantly, Thompson erases the fact that many of the "orphans" have mothers and fathers back in Haiti who are unable to tuck them in because they have been taken from them. She attempts to argue that the ends, Haitian children living American lives, justify the means, the removal of the children from their families. This is made particularly obvious by the use of a

quotation from a missionary who adopted three Haitian toddlers: “[Haiti is] not full of unwanted children. It’s full of children whose families are too poor to provide for them.” Adoption to the US is falsely presented as the only solution to child poverty in Haiti, despite adoptive parents’ acknowledgment that many of the children are wanted by their parents. (To recall Tina Rosenberg’s argument that I cited in Chapter 2: if Americans really cared about child poverty, they would give families the money that they need rather than taking the children from those families.) Supporters of the missionaries praised the lax adoptions due to the earthquake as the divine work of God. Said one adoptive parent who is quoted in Thompson’s article, “God got done in 10 days something human beings couldn’t do in years.” Such expressions of Panglossian egoism were common in conversations among the STM participants with whom I worked. In one discussion in 2013, Kelsey, who was looking to adopt from Haiti, complained that the stricter regulations on Haitian adoptions that were instituted in reaction to the incidents described above were bad, because they made it harder for Americans to adopt. Only Andrea, who had more intimate knowledge of orphans in Haiti, disagreed, arguing that the new restrictions protected children and held adoption agencies accountable.

It is common among evangelicals to believe that church leaders and mission organizers are a frequent target of the devil because of the important work that they do to combat evil through evangelization and other works. In one discussion, Jason warned Erica, a missionary in training, “I have seen the devil working on people, and it happens more than we know.” Many STM participants describe how “the devil is working on” someone. Regarding their own work, the Hope team attributes their inability to start a

mission at their clinic to the "devil working hard and having his way." As I will explain later in this chapter, the slow start to the Hope mission was the result of their long-term missionary's corrupt and fraudulent practices. These explanations are not seen as incompatible; the Hope team believes that the missionary had been tempted by the devil to commit such acts. The frequently employed phrase "the devil is working on" deflects personal accountability, but it does not completely absolve wrong-doers. The phrase generally does not portray someone who has evil thoughts or is committing evil acts, but someone who is actively sparring with the devil and thus far has not succumbed by virtue of inner moral strength, prayer, and the power of Jesus. These discursive formulations, which downplay Americans' personal responsibility for suffering in the world, stand in intriguing contrast to those expressing divine heroism, which portray Americans as divinely commanded to take action against evil.

This framework for understanding agency and evil illuminates a popular defense of volunteer tourism: participants have good intentions. The Bible lays out specific rules that govern behavior and thought, and that thereby define the forms of behavior and thought that are considered moral. These rules have been taken up differently in different sociohistorical contexts. Most relevant to the present discussion of STMs are the definitions of good that are expressed in the moral ideologies of Panglossian egoism and divine heroism, as described in Chapter 5. In short, that which is God's plan or God's will is considered good. That which is "evil," human action that goes against God's will, can still be understood as part of God's plan because of the lessons that it may teach (Panglossian egoism) and the good that it may inspire in others (divine heroism). If these

ideas are followed to their logical conclusion, that conclusion is that everything has the potential to be good. This poses a second theological conundrum, a counterpart to the problem of evil that I call the problem of good. The problem of good effectively elides evil by rendering it a source (a potential source, at least) of good. Much like the ways that the conceptualization of evil outlined above can be used to absolve people of responsibility for evil, the problem of good can be used to absolve them of accountability for any negative outcomes of STMs, as long as those involved are perceived as having good intentions. As one STM leader put it, "We do everything in the name of Jesus and for Jesus." Ideological constructs such as this limit the possibility for critique, at least among fellow Christians. The problem of good reinforces the belief that STMs are inherently good, even when they fail to address the root causes of suffering and even when they harm those whom they are intended to help.

STM discourses emphasize participants' *wanting* to do good, which is privileged over actions and results. In his book on faith-based volunteering, Christian writer Robert D. Lupton (2011:188) asserts that "compassion is a reflection of the divine." Lupton thus sanctifies the feeling behind an action, which has the effect of excusing unwanted results or outcomes of that action. Dominican STM participants, even those who may be affected by the negative results (or lack of results) of STM work, likewise portray STMs as sacrifice in service to God's will. In church, prior to the arrival of an STM group, Pastor Ricardo prays for the teams:

> No están aquí de vacaciones. Están aquí para servirte, glorificarte y bendecir a otros haciendo tu trabajo.

> They are not here on vacation. They are here to serve you, to glorify you, and to bless others by doing your work.

In a Facebook post, Javier expressed his gratitude to the teams, thanking God for sending STM teams to the Dominican Republic and asking God to bless them for changing people's lives. The viewpoint expressed in STM discourses aligns with Kantian deontological (obligation or duty) ethics, in which an action's morality is judged on whether the action is right or wrong rather than on the consequences of the action. It also aligns with the Durkheimian approach to morality, in which morality is considered both duty and desire. In this model, any action, provided that the intention that motivates it is "good," takes precedence over its consequences. American participants also benefit from the timespans of STMs, which average only a week, making the outcomes of their efforts (or the lack thereof) difficult to track over the long term. Participants leave the country and project imagined outcomes of whatever they did, (re)producing STM and popular aid discourses in affirming to themselves and others that they did good. Even in the cases of teams that return to the same community every year, participants focus on the most outwardly visible changes that have resulted from their activities, which prevents them from achieving insight into how much, aside from some fresh paint and new buildings, has stayed the same for the people living there the other 51 weeks of the year.

For STM participants, as long as they are acting "in God's name," their actions are considered good, even if the consequences of those actions are not good. This does not mean, though, that STM participants do not try to improve the outcomes of their actions. Both within the volunteer-tourism industry and outside of it, criticisms focus on the idea that good intentions are not enough; as Jason once remarked, "a lot of people

have good intentions but not direction." I opened Chapter 2 by describing the ways that STM leaders and participants have been sincere in trying to learn from criticisms of the industry and to position themselves as the exception. However, lack of accountability for unintended negative outcomes of their work persists. Unearned privileges that enable Americans to volunteer in the first place, and that place and keep them in positions of dominance, exclude and even silence the voices of local people, during STM encounters. Good intentions can be self-serving and even harmful if they are not supported by qualifications, expertise, and sustainable solutions that are welcomed by, and that involve genuine engagement with, local communities (Wendy 2019).

Poverty, Inequality, and Dependency

I have thus far sketched out evangelical understandings of good and evil and STM participation as a response to human suffering. But how exactly do American volunteers act? The conceptualization of evil as originating in an identifiable external spiritual force that manipulates human behavior—namely, the devil—leads to an incomplete and inaccurate understanding of the problems that Dominicans face. The distinction between good and evil intentions figures prominently in the shaping of STM projects, largely by obfuscating the link between poverty and inequality. In my hundreds of pages of fieldnotes and dozens of hours of recorded data, STM participants never mention "inequality." In contrast, there are countless mentions and discussions of "poverty," "poor," "Third World," and related terms. This focus on poverty and inattention to inequality reflect and shape the ways in which STM participants act and the overall form that STM projects take.

Poverty, particularly so-called “Third World poverty,” is initially an abstract notion for American STM participants. It is made more concrete for them in curated ways as they journey through the Dominican Republic, touring bateyes and visiting homes. They tend to characterize what they encounter in terms of the “culture of poverty” thesis (as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4). This largely debunked theory posits that impoverished people act irrationally and lack personal responsibility (both of which are sometimes construed as immoral), and thus are at least partly to blame for their own circumstances and lack of socioeconomic mobility. In broadly similar ways, the term “Third World” portrays “undeveloped” or “underdeveloped” countries as backwards and dependent on “First World” countries. These discourses of poverty are revealing of how Americans conceptualize the problems that they believe Dominicans face and the best ways to address them. Use of the term “poverty” can itself be degrading. In the culture-of-poverty thesis and likewise in everyday discourses about “development,” the term is used to assign blame to poor people. It describes only the material conditions that Americans encounter, without addressing or even acknowledging the root causes of those conditions.

Unlike such notions of poverty, notions of “inequality” attend to the systemic and institutional issues that give rise to poverty and tend to perpetuate it. Although some Americans regard poverty as systemic and may use the phrase “cycle of poverty,” referring to conditions of limited resources that perpetuate poverty, they often apply the concept vaguely and conflate it with “culture of poverty.” Even so, the term “inequality,” unlike “poverty” suggests a relational conceptualization of class status that makes it possible to understand Americans’ high class position as implicated in Dominicans’

significantly lower position. STM participants characterize their relationship with Dominicans as egalitarian (see Chapters 3 and 4), a relationship in which, despite their different backgrounds and class statuses, they are equal as Christians. However, in trying to downplay the differences in order to achieve a sense of unity, they overlook or de-emphasize the vast inequalities between the two groups. In his work on partnerships between predominantly Black and predominantly white evangelical churches in the US, Elisha found that, although both groups focused on equality as a form of harmony between groups, only Black churches engaged with the idea of social justice. According to Emerson and Smith (2000), the notion of social justice conflicts with white evangelicals' emphasis on individualism and other conservative values. For just such reasons, participants in Dominican Republic Missions (DRM) STMs do not confront the sugar companies as the source of the problems in the bateyes; they aim instead to make marginal improvements in material living conditions and tend to workers' health issues. The closest they come to addressing root causes is occasionally helping youths escape the bateyes by paying for their education or assisting some Haitian-Dominicans in attaining legal status.

Some critics assert that volunteer tourism, besides failing to bring about long-term improvements to people's lives, may even create a cycle of aid. According to *Toxic Charity* and *When Helping Hurts*, the books recommended to me by missionaries and STM participants, STMs are in danger of creating what both books' authors term "a culture of dependency." In *Toxic Charity*, Lupton (2011, 2) states that, although charity is generally regarded as virtuous and constructive, it can create dependency by diminishing

the poor's dignity, destroying their personal initiative, and eroding their work ethic, thus creating a permanent underclass. STM missionaries and participants voiced to me their concerns about creating such a cycle of dependency, which would then be internalized by Dominicans. Pastor Ricardo said at one point that he thought that the coming year would be the best year for his church, explaining that, under previous missionaries, they had been sick from being dependent. He believed that they would mature and work against this sickness. Those who harbor concerns about dependency overlook the conditions that created poverty in the first place, making a circular argument that need fosters dependency. This position is substantially influenced by the culture-of-poverty thesis; it involves blaming the poor for their class status, attributing it to greed and laziness, while also holding volunteers partly culpable as enablers. This culture-of-dependency position reflects tenets of the culture-of-poverty thesis and modernization theories. Lupton proposes avoiding dependency by empowering local people through "employment, lending, and investing"; these are the basis of alternative approaches that both All Because of Christ (ABC) and Dominican Republic Missions (DRM) have fairly recently adopted, which I will address in Chapter 8.

The threat of dependency lies not with the recipients of aid from STMs, who typically receive it only a few times a year; STM aid does not constitute a livelihood for anyone. Rather, corporations and consumers around the world are dependent to some degree on STM aid given to workers, for it enables their oppression and thus helps keeps labor costs low. As in the case of STMs targeting batey workers, volunteer efforts may work against more permanent solutions by enabling the sugar companies to receive free

healthcare, housing, and other necessities for their workers at no cost to the companies, which are then free to continue to pay workers low wages, provide subpar housing, and provide little if any medical care despite the physical tolls of the work. The aid provided by STMs also helps to quell any unrest against the sugar corporations or the government. Ramón, a Haitian mission organizer, explained to me the influence that the major sugar companies have on the Dominican government:

> This is a country of great corruption. [The sugar companies have] a lot of the power, but they are a government. They are a government in the government. The government understands when they have [companies] like this one that can support all of this area. They say, "Let's keep these people working." But if the government didn't support the [sugar companies], Haitians here would have another life. You see that; you have to come down here from the United States to give them medication. The sugar cane company should be providing this to these kids.

Ramón argues that provision of basic necessities such as clean water, schools, and healthcare should be the responsibility of the government and the sugar corporations. Instead, it is STMs and NGOs that step in to fulfill some of these needs. In contrast to Lupton's notion of aid dependency, the dependency theory of globalization mentioned in Chapter 2, asserts that Americans are relatively wealthy and able to give charity because their country has benefited from a history of imperialism, capitalism, and ongoing exploitation of "Third World" countries such as the Dominican Republic. From this perspective, it is the United States and other countries who have created and benefitted from a cycle of dependency in periphery nations by extracting resources and exploiting labor.

In the following sections of this chapter, I examine the specific actions that STM participants take and how these actions may or may not address systemic poverty.

Volunteer tourists may provide some temporary relief, but they fall far short of breaking the cycle of poverty; a mission that lasts only one week can hardly be expected to bring about such far-reaching change. STMs also have cumulative effects; different groups may visit the same batey multiple times over the course of the year, and some groups may return to the same location every year. But even this does not bring about substantive change. Lacking relevant professional expertise, STM participants are not able to address the complex issues that perpetuate poverty, such as systemic racism and disenfranchisement; and the actions that they do take are often misguided and self-serving. Furthermore, STM participants rely on interpreters and cultural brokers, usually American missionaries or local STM organizers, who have their own motivations and intentions. Similarly, STM leaders, lacking expertise and knowledge and mistrusting local people, rely on long-term missionaries and STM organizers, who may also lack relevant qualifications and knowledge. These conditions frequently result in mismanaged STMs, which, in turn, result in misguided actions, fraudulent use of funds, and even harm to local communities.

Evangelization and Economic Relief

The evangelical response to human suffering addresses both the material and the spiritual. This is in line with the dual goals of STMs: evangelization and alleviation of poverty, the latter either direct, through the giving of aid, or indirect, through the provision of medical or other services. A typical STM work project includes holding free or low-cost medical clinics; building or painting houses, churches, clinics, or schools; and hosting church retreats, youth church camps, and children's church day camps known as "Vacation Bible

School," or "VBS." In addition to these primary projects, participants sometimes also engage in secondary projects, such as the construction of a batey community garden and educational demonstrations concerning nutrition and health. STM teams also distribute charitable gifts, including boxes of fortified rice, clothing (new and used), hygiene kits that include items such as toothbrushes and soap, and, sometimes, cash. There are some STM teams whose work projects revolve around giving gifts, such as the Making a Difference team, which provides school uniforms for the student members of the affiliated mission churches. Some groups send or distribute Christmas gifts to children during the month of December.

The dual goals of evangelization and economic relief may be intertwined within the same STM project. For instance, at a VBS, where Americans, through interpreters, lead religion-based educational activities, children are rewarded for their attendance with snacks for the day and sometimes other gifts. Patients waiting to be seen at an STM medical clinic are engaged in conversation about their religious beliefs and prayed over by volunteers. In such ways as these, religious and economic discourses and values become intertwined. A common criticism of missionization is that gifts and other aid may function as the primary motivation, even as bribes, for local people, who may be deceitful and may perform religious beliefs or conversion insincerely. In my experience in the Dominican Republic, where large numbers of people already identify as Christians, aid functions more as an incentive to participate in religious activities than to fabricate beliefs outright. In order to receive school supplies from Making a Difference, children must demonstrate regular church attendance. The local leaders of churches track student

attendance at Sunday school throughout the year. They admit, with a knowing chuckle, that they see a rise in attendance in the months leading up to Making a Difference's annual trip in August, right before the start of school. Joe, the organizer of the Making a Difference mission, wants to foster sincere church participation, but he does not see incentivizing attendance as fostering dishonesty or as incompatible with his mission; on the contrary, it is part of the mission's design. Joe frames Making a Difference as "outreach," a term often used by evangelicals and other Christians to refer to acts, often charitable in nature, that are intended as a form of community engagement, with the aim of attracting people to the church or faith.

In many cases, missions must prioritize the dual goals of evangelization and humanitarian aid, giving one precedence over the other. Of the two STM organizations that I closely observed, DRM is more focused on providing humanitarian aid in the bateyes, while ABC's work projects are considered secondary to the team's religious outreach. These different prioritizations are apparent in the two organizations' work projects. DRM teams more frequently host medical clinics and do construction work; in its early days, DRM constructed one of the region's largest hospitals. ABC's history of work projects include the construction of churches and a school; more recently, it has focused on beautification of existing facilities. ABC places greater emphasis on evangelization through home visits, church retreats, and Vacation Bible Schools. Once, while in conversation with two college interns who were working with a separate mission on rehabilitation of children rescued from sex trafficking—a significant problem in the Dominican Republic, which is known for sex tourism—Jason lamented that many newer

missions were "too focused on the humanitarian side." Jason quickly self-corrected his statement to acknowledge the importance of the work that the interns were doing, and stated that "ultimately, we are all working for the Kingdom." However, he defended his opinion, explaining that he thought that humanitarian-focused missions were "flashier" and more successful in attracting donors, thus drawing needed attention and funds away from missions like his that focus on evangelism. For Jason, the purpose of the humanitarian work undertaken by the STM teams affiliated with his mission is to fund the long-term mission's evangelism. STMs provide experiential learning and the opportunity to cultivate relationships with local people, which motivate participants to become future donors. For evangelically focused missionaries such as Jason, saving peoples' souls for the afterlife takes precedence over improving those peoples' socioeconomic conditions and material well-being, which could save their lives in the present.

Among evangelism-focused missions, cross-cultural connections in the forms of proselytization and fellowship are of the highest priority. Jason's vision for ABC's STMs centers around evangelization and fellowship rather than "work." In fact, work projects become the medium through which he fosters cross-cultural interactions. Jason explained to one team that was tasked with repainting part of the interior of the church:

> Remember that the painting and that stuff, that's not the most important thing. It's not about the work project, although that is good too. But the main reason that you are here is to be with the people, so if you see people, especially kids around, go play with them and be with them.

This statement makes the encounter aspect of the STM a higher priority and moral imperative than the work project, which, in many cases, falls short of bringing about substantive change. Jason then concluded with a prayer that thanked God for putting the American team into contact with local people. Jason's expression of these sentiments in a group prayer is significant. According to Corwin (2014, 174), group prayers, particularly petitions to the divine, function on three socio-communicative levels: as "an index of the presence of the divine," as "a means for individuals to communicate social support," and as "a mode of peer socialization." The many group prayers that are led by Jason and others function on all three of the levels that Corwin describes and serve to reaffirm participants' sense of purpose during an STM. Cross-cultural interactions facilitated by STMs are cited by many participants as raising their awareness of the world. For Jason and ABC, these cross-cultural interactions are educational as well as important for creating meaningful personal relationships. These relationships, in turn, are important for cultivating participants' connection to the mission and sense of responsibility for Dominicans, which, Jason hopes, will ultimately motivate individuals and churches to contribute financially to the mission. Participation in an STM personalizes the cause and makes the need for donations more urgently felt. In this regard, it works something like the photographs of sponsored children and personal letters from those children that Compassion International, the Christian humanitarian-aid organization, sends to its donors.

Figure 10: An American youth team play outdoor games with Dominican and Haitian-Dominican children after leading them in educational religious activities at a "Vacation Bible School."

The evangelism approach is criticized by evangelical authors such as Lupton (2011, 41), who contends that jobs are the most effective means of eradicating poverty: "Bible studies and sports did not help [people] get jobs. Mercy ministry alone is insufficient." Lupton cites the Bible as support: "to act justly and to love mercy" (Micah 6:8). The long-term missionary Andrea confides that "a lot of the time [short-term] missions come, and we don't have things for them to do so we take them around." At ABC, if there is not an ongoing project at hand when a group visits, teams are tasked with repainting and beautifying mission-owned buildings. Jason explains that painting buildings is an ideal STM project because it is relatively affordable compared to actual construction. Since most STM funds go toward the team's personal expenses, such as travel and lodging (see Chapter 2), there is less to spend on the actual mission work. Painting is a task that teenagers, and likewise adults who lack construction experience, can easily complete, with little risk of injury. Moreover, the Caribbean sun has strong fading effects, and long-term missionaries want to prevent their properties from

appearing to be neglected or in a state of disrepair; this concern likely stems from the "broken windows theory," which is frequently cited by STM participants (as will be discussed below). Painting is often singled out by critics as a kind of "make-work" project, however; Lupton (2011, 3) cites the case of a church building in Mexico that was repainted six times, by six different groups, over the course of a single summer. Such projects are only meaningful to the American participants, who are ignorant (willfully or not) of the actual impact, or lack thereof, that their efforts will have on the community.

Make-Work STMs

Some STM proponents are aware, or become aware, that "make-work" STMs are largely self-serving, but they come to the conclusion that these trips are educational for Americans and do not cause harm to local people. This is not entirely accurate and presents other problems as well. What does volunteering mean if the purpose or primary result is centered on the volunteer feelings, especially if those feelings often lead to ineffective action? As more and more STMs move towards educational tourism or a service-learning model, participants may decide to readdress how or whether to engage in work projects, including reconfiguring relations with local peoples. Such undertakings pose their own challenges. When Americans ask local people what they can offer them or how they can improve on what they are currently doing for them, local people are typically reticent due to the newness of their relationships with the volunteers, language barriers, and power differentials. (When they do speak up, they are rarely critical of the STM model and only sometimes critical of specific practices and persons.) Such information is sometimes collected by local STM organizers, but they do not represent all

local people and they have their own interests (including financial interests, in the case of for-profit organizations).

Make-work STMs can and do cause harm to local people and communities. In some ways, make-work STMs may be harmful *because* they involve only painting buildings and the like. Make-work STMs leave Americans with the illusion that they have "made a difference," which contributes to white-savior narratives and inspires new volunteer tourists. STM leaders promote this understanding, praising teams for their sacrifices and hard work and telling them, as one youth leader did, "Know you've made a difference and be encouraged." Make-work STMs can give Americans a false and even harmful impression of local people and of what needs to be done to improve a community. If all that were necessary to combat poverty were a few coats of brightly colored paint, then why would local people not do the painting themselves? STM narratives and discourses feed into Americans' understandings of such matters. For instance, Jason tells teams that their work will help local church members take pride in their church. This statement implies that local people are ashamed of their community and portrays them as waiting on foreigners to spend a couple of hundred dollars and do the needed work over the course of several afternoons. Jason also asserts that Americans' work ethic and engagement with local people inspire the latter to take action. As I explained in Chapter 3, many American missionaries believe that people in developing countries lack initiative and drive to make changes in their own living conditions. In one interview, Jason described Latin Americans as "kind of lazy" before backtracking and reframing the matter, saying:

> They are at least very relaxed about getting things done. I don't want to generalize, but Dominicans take forever to get things done. They don't follow schedules, and they are not good for running business [...] They have no business savvy or even common sense that Americans get from their culture without even having to study it.

Similarly, Blake, one of the mission interns, believed that Americans were needed in the Dominican Republic "to see the things that Dominicans can't." Statements such as these reproduce culture-of-poverty discourses and paternalistic development discourses in which developing countries are helpless and inept and Americans have a moral responsibility (or burden) because of their superior knowledge and qualities. This partly explains why many STM participants feel called to go to another country to perform mission work rather than simply to send money.

Even when focusing on something as seemingly innocuous as make-work projects, American STM participants may do harm; even their efforts to beautify buildings, for example. In one instance, an STM team painted educational murals on the walls of an ABC-run primary-school building that presented a North American perspective on the world. The interior walls of one classroom depicted "the four seasons." The wall portraying fall featured trees with red and yellow leaves, and the winter scene depicted falling snow. Such images present Dominican students with a model of "the seasons" that conflicts with their own experiences of the natural world and thus diminishes them. Such lack of consideration on the part of STM teams extends to the teaching materials that they donate. When the school first opened, Americans donated school supplies and pedagogical materials, most of which were intended for American students and native speakers of English. Many of the materials dealt with US history and

geography, such as the names of US presidents and state capitals. Besides being largely worthless to the recipients, these donations demonstrated an ethnocentric worldview in which English and the US are the unmarked norms, subsuming or superseding all other histories, experiences, and realities.

As these examples suggest, beyond being self-serving, make-work projects center Americans and their perspectives on the world in various ways. An STM team painted a mural on an exterior wall at the front of the ABC school complex (Figure 11). It depicted two Caucasian children with blonde or light-brown hair surrounded by hearts, all below the words *color esperanza*, meaning "hope color" (also the name of a popular song). I first saw the mural in an image published by the Making a Difference team in their annual report to their donors. This image of Black and Brown Dominican children posing in their new school uniforms, purchased for them by the team, immediately revealed the significance of this representation. This exterior mural goes a step beyond the interior murals and teaching materials described above, which ignore local people's history, geography, and climate—this mural effectively erases Dominican identity. It presents a white-American image of schoolchildren, ignoring what the school's actual students actually look like: Dominican and Haitian children in standard school uniforms. Dominican schoolchildren are unlikely to identify with the image that greets them when they enter school each day. The mural represents not a failure to represent racial and ethnic diversity, as it might in the US, but an erasure of Dominican social reality. In the Dominican Republic, the majority of the population, roughly 85%, identifies as *negro* or *indio/mestizo*. As important a consideration as race is for many Americans who travel to

the Dominican Republic as STM participants, race-related issues are carefully avoided in the actual practice of STMs. Representation is important because identity is shaped by recognition or, in this case, the absence of recognition (Taylor 1994, 25). Lack of representation, especially for children, can impact self-esteem. As Taylor argues, a healthy sense of self can only flourish if people and the communities to which they belong are recognized in both the intimate sphere and in the public sphere.

The mural is also a striking manifestation of white saviorism: (white) American STM participants bring hope and redemption, which is put on display for the purpose of uplifting impoverished people of color. Ironically, the mural's juxtaposition of white children with the words *color esperanza* (hope color) seems to present whiteness as hope for poor people of color. The Dominican church leaders who run the school and the Dominican teachers who educate the children are rendered invisible, erased from this hope. The mural acknowledges instead the American STM team that came to visit for a few days, played with the children, and memorialized the occasion in paint. Interestingly, *esperanza* or hope is one of the more common names for American missions and mission-run institutions in the Dominican Republic. Hope is a common theme in Christianity, personified in the historically whitewashed figure of Jesus Christ. It is unlikely that the American team intended to suggest that the color of hope is white, or even knew the translation of *color esperanza*; nevertheless, the design is ill-conceived and reveals a lack of regard for Dominicans' lives and realities. It illustrates that, despite the assurances that STM teams give that they are different from other volunteer tourists (as noted in Chapter 2), the white savior is still placed at the center.

Figure 11: An American-painted mural next to a Dominican schoolyard depicts two white children under the words "Color of Hope."

The painting of murals, beyond being volunteer-centric, reveals that the STM commitment to make-work projects is motivated by misguided understandings of poverty that fail to address inequality. Many STM participants are middle- or upper-class white Americans whose initial understandings of poverty focus on highly visible signs of neglect and disrepair rather than underlying causes and everyday lived experiences. Consider in this regard the discussions reported in Chapter 3 in which STM participants comment on the stark contrasts between Dominican neighborhoods and their own in the US. Beautification projects are motivated in part by STM participants' belief in the "broken windows theory." According to that debunked theory, visible signs of disorder such as vandalism, disrepair, and uncleanliness encourage crime and cause lack of self-esteem within a community, perpetuating the cycle of poverty. American STM participants are outspoken about their concerns with visible disorder, particularly the litter and trash that they observe in the bateyes. Team members were often excited to ask

me about my insights into Dominican life. In many cases, the first question was why Dominicans throw their trash everywhere. “It’s a shame that they don’t take pride in their community,” one participant told me. The issue of trash was more than a matter of passing observation; it was taken up by many teams as a passion project. In a discussion on the topic, the Hope group debated what steps they should take in broaching the issue:

> – It’s a real shame to look out and see all the trash. It’s like they just don’t care. Jason told me that they have trash collection.
> – We should tell them that the world is God’s beautiful gift to us, and they need to take care of it.
> – They’re not that sophisticated. They’re just not, we’re not at that level yet.

The team’s concern with trash prioritizes an issue of neglect over more pressing, albeit more complex, concerns such as unemployment, domestic violence, and lack of access to affordable nutritious food. Coming from an American experience of trash collection, the team members overlook the likely causes of litter in the local context and do not consider any possible solutions to such problems as the lack of public trash cans and the cost of trash bags. They are also underinformed and perhaps misinformed about trash collection in the country; what they know comes from the long-term missionary’s experience of living in a relatively wealthy gated neighborhood. Trash-collection service is less available in other neighborhoods, particularly outside of town. Their discussion is reminiscent of modernization theory and other discourses of development. In particular, the comment that “they’re not that sophisticated” suggests concepts of modernity and economic development that tend to become conflated with notions of moral progress. The reference to the world as “God’s beautiful gift” brings morality to the fore of the discussion by asserting that littering and otherwise failing to take care of that world is

sinful behavior. Along the same lines, team members are also very vocal about lawn care for the mission's church properties. A green, manicured lawn is something of an obsession for many middle- and upper-class suburban homeowners in the US, and they tend to interpret the lack of one as evidence of laziness, dereliction of duty, and sinful neglect of the church.

At the end of their conversation, the Hope team concluded that, by ignoring the issue of trash in the community, they were condoning it. They agreed that "to permit is to promote." They discussed starting a rewards program that would encourage people to take care of their trash by paying them, reasoning that "to reward a behavior is to create a repeated behavior." Only one man objected to this idea, likening it to a joke about a snake and a fisherman who had run out of bait, an analogy that compared the proposed program to training animals. At the time of this writing, the rewards program has yet to be implemented. As much as American teams complain about trash, the Hope team's only concrete solution to litter and waste was to provide gifts of quick-drying reusable diapers for mothers with infants. About 10 packs of two diapers each were passed out to mothers who attended an information session about them. The cloth diapers were presented as a sustainable alternative to costly and wasteful disposable diapers. As much as American teams discuss the presence of trash as both a reflection and a source of lack of pride in the local community, Americans often contribute to the litter problem themselves during their time there. At the end of a Vacation Bible School (VBS), teams typically hand out snacks consisting of individually wrapped food items and drinks that have been poured into plastic cups. Inexperienced groups do not anticipate the lack of public trash

receptacles and do not provide their own waste-disposal bags; the result is that the children throw their trash on the ground.

The idea that the recipients of STM aid lack the agency or the will to improve their own lives, and therefore need intervention from abroad, is sometimes echoed by the local organizers who work alongside American STM organizers. During a house visit, Javier, the Hope team's Dominican doctor, spoke of his desire to help the family get a better house. But he was hesitant to make such a proposal to the STM team, saying, "There are more problems that cannot be solved by money alone. They need to be educated. They have not shown that they can take care of a house, so before they get a house, they need to clean up the trash in their yard." Dr. Javier thus articulated the need for accountability, a common topic of discussion among STM participants that evokes neoliberal notions of personal responsibility. According to Elisha, Christian discourses of accountability evince theological paternalism. Elisha (2010, 284) describes how Christian authority figures cite such principles as "tough love" in order to "dictate the terms of moral action for others by claiming to know what is best for them." In order to receive aid, local people must prove themselves to be moral subjects through specific practices such as professing Christian faith, maintaining a respectable outward appearance, and showing devotion to God.

Misguided Action

The focus on donating goods, and the types of goods donated, reflect American STM participants' preoccupation with mitigating the most visible aspects of poverty. They also reflect a lack of concern with inequality. The ways in which goods are given is often

misguided and mismanaged, a result of lack of cultural knowledge and professional expertise. Donations are typically made without consultation with the local mission or community, meaning that goods are sent or brought without regard to actual needs or wants. Some of these donations go unused and take up storage space, as in the case of a large box of 450 misprinted t-shirts that were brought by Joe's church. After the box sat in customs limbo for over a year because the church was charged an unexpected duty for importing what appeared to be commercial goods into the country, its release was secured only after the team contacted their US senator, who reached out to the Dominican ambassador. As Joe wrote to his donors,

> While we are frustrated and do not understand why the airport insists on imposing a tax on humanitarian aid we have brought for their country, we continue to pray that God will move their hearts to compassion (or at least common sense!) and release the shirts so that we can distribute them to the impoverished children of their country.

Joe expresses bewilderment that aid should be taxed. He describes the donation as "humanitarian aid" and implies that the country should be grateful to receive this aid for its "impoverished children" (though the shirts were mostly adult sizes). He decries the tax on this gift without recognizing that such in-kind donations are harmful to local economies. The tax serves to make up for the negative impact that the shirts would have on the Dominican economy. Donations such as these t-shirts diminish the need for products to be manufactured and purchased locally, driving local people out of work and out of business and destroying entire industries. Moreover, donations of goods are much more costly to transport and distribute than are donations of cash, which would stimulate the local economy.

Many Americans mistakenly believe that any type of donation will eagerly be accepted by Dominicans. The donors expected that, in the years after they were released, the shirts would be worn frequently by many members of the local church. Many of the shirts were distributed and are worn on occasion, but a large box of shirts still sits in the church's storage area, where they are sometimes picked up by members of the youth group and used to create matching costumes for church performances. Some of the donors were disappointed to find that their donations were not as useful as they had believed them to be; others wondered why the church had not distributed all of the shirts. Giving to the less fortunate is a long-valued Christian behavior. However, even when a particular kind of good is requested, many donations are ill-conceived and entirely unusable, like the leftover English-language school materials donated to the ABC school. Some donations arrive broken or worn. In these cases, the gifts benefit the giver more than the receiver. American STM teams regard donating as environmentally conscious. Recycling their old possessions by donating them to Dominicans serves as a guilt-free way for Americans to discard unwanted or even damaged goods, and as a way to rationalize their own consumerism. For these reasons, STM participants would much rather donate their own used and worn goods, which are costly to ship, than buy the same kinds of goods new in the Dominican Republic and thus contribute to the local economy. As this suggests, donating is more about feeling good than doing good; and even the feeling good does not extend to local people, who are given worn or useless things that the Americans did not consider good enough for themselves.

Gifts may place unnecessary burdens on recipients and are sometimes even costly to local people, who may not have asked for these goods nor have any use for them. One example involves two large boxes sent via FedEx to Javier by Ed and Betsy, an American couple who visit the island annually. When Javier collected the boxes, he was charged around $80 in import duties, which he paid out of pocket. Initially, Javier was happy to spend such a large sum of money, thinking that the boxes contained something vital for his community, such as medications for the Hope clinic that he runs. When he opened the boxes, he discovered that both boxes were filled with used soccer balls. Privately, Javier expressed his anger over having spent $80 to receive used soccer balls. Not wanting to offend Ed and Betsy, who were ignorant of the cost of their well-intentioned generosity, Javier did not mention it to them or ask for reimbursement. Six months later (at which time the soccer balls were still sitting unused in his apartment), Ed and Betsy returned to the Dominican Republic and were discussing sending Javier another bulk shipment: this time, file folders from Ed's office that were no longer needed. Javier politely thanked them for thinking of the mission but explained that they did not have a need for so many file folders. Despite Javier's objection, Ed and Betsy continued to express their desire to send the folders, insisting that Javier or someone else at the mission would eventually find some need for them. In order to deter them, Javier at last revealed the high personal cost of accepting their last shipment. Without mention of reimbursing him or even acknowledgment of the burden that they had placed on Javier, Ed and Betsy claimed that Javier was mistaken; a friend who worked with FedEx had waived their shipment fee. A bit frustrated, Javier tried to explain that the shipping fee in the US was unrelated to the

import duty that he had been charged in the Dominican Republic, but Ed and Betsy remained determined to make the shipment.

The t-shirts, soccer balls, and file folders mentioned above were all misguided donations that did not take local needs into account, largely because of miscommunication, lack of knowledge of local regulations, and, above all, unwillingness to listen to, and to learn from, local input. Javier's attitude reflects his belief in the ultimate good of the mission, even if things are not always done in the most effective or efficient ways. Javier hopes to have his own faith-based foundation someday. It is for such reasons that Javier and other Dominican ABC employees do STM work and sometimes spend their own money on mission-related expenses for which they are not reimbursed. The employees with whom I spoke chose not to broach the issue for several reasons, including being afraid that reminding a team of a missed payment or reimbursement would jeopardize future employment. They also desired to make the relationship with the mission less transactional and more egalitarian. "I don't do this for the money," stated Javier in a conversation with me. Although the extra income that they earn working for the mission is a boon, many local STM employees such as Javier are also dedicated to giving back through the missions, since they share in its religious beliefs and are themselves former recipients of STM aid or have family and friends in the communities served by STMs. In fact, Javier and other local STM employees lead their own church's youth groups on smaller-scale outreach projects (as I will examine further in Chapter 7).

There are STM teams whose leaders and members are more receptive to listening to the community and learning what is needed. For instance, Joe started Making a Difference after talking to local people and learning from them that the required school uniforms made the otherwise free public-school cost-prohibitive for some families. After initiating that program and building it over the course of a decade, eventually reaching over 500 students per year, Joe again listened to the community when they expressed their desire that he devote some of his mission's funds to a college-scholarship program. In part because of the outreach by Making a Difference, the churches served by the team had higher rates of high-school graduation among their youth than ever before. However, a dismal job market characterized by few opportunities and low pay meant that a high-school degree was not enough to enable these youth to escape poverty. Although there is room for criticism of the Making a Difference model of giving (as I will consider in Chapter 7), by making education attainable, Joe's mission and other college- scholarship programs help to equip youth to improve their own lives. Moreover, Joe purchases the school uniforms and equipment locally, thus putting the money into the Dominican economy; and he limits the number of American volunteers, relying instead on a team of local volunteers, made up of parents and former recipients of aid.

Mismanagement and Cultural Clash

Even STM projects that meet demonstrated needs, such as construction and food-distribution projects, are subject to mismanagement due to miscommunication and lack of oversight. In one notable example, members of the Hope team had partnered with DRM in the prior year to build a house in a batey for a man who worked as a sugar-cane cutter

and his family. At the end of the week, the team held a celebration to bless the completed house. During the event, it was revealed that the man and his wife had separated and that she had returned to Haiti with their children. The house that the team had built was actually for the man and his new partner—in the Hope team's words, his "mistress." Team members describe how the scene rapidly devolved into arguments between the Dominican mission organizers, the man, and some of the other residents of the batey. The Hope team was opposed to giving the man the house, viewing it as abetting adultery. In the end, DRM leaders locked up the structure and the Hope team left the batey, not knowing what would become of the house for which they had raised money all year and had spent the week building.

At first glance, it may appear that this situation broke down solely due to mismanagement, or because DRM, as the organization in charge, had not adequately surveyed the community and done due diligence in regard to the family. However, the failure to identify an appropriate recipient for the house reflects a culturally based disconnect between moral ideologies. According to my Dominican participants, although Christian churches in the Dominican Republic do not condone unwed couples living together, neither is the practice widely condemned, as it would alienate many from the church and cut them off from spiritual and economic resources. This would especially be a problem for Haitians, who may be undocumented and cannot risk formalizing their unions under Dominican law. However, when it comes to receiving American aid, local people must meet moral criteria. Although American missionaries make allowances and even indulge in some cultural relativism, they make little room for any moral relativism.

Neither is their acknowledgment of the relationship between culture and morality. The STM goal of expanding the worldviews of young American participants is limited to doing so in ways that reaffirm Christian values; and the good intentions on which STMs are based do not extend to people in need who conduct themselves in ways that threaten the normative Christian moral order.

In other cases, teams more carefully identify who needs help but are uncertain how to help. For example, the Hope team decided to thank Elena, the Haitian nurse whom they employ, for her work tending to patients at their year-round clinic. When I accompanied ABC coordinators Reinaldo and Alex to a building-supply store in preparation for the project, I was surprised to learn that the team had decided to paint Elena's house, a result of their having been socialized over the years to default to make-work projects. Confused, I asked, "*Pintan la casa de Elena?*" (They are painting Elena's house?) Alex shrugged and said that he was thinking the exact same thing, but that the team had said that that was what Elena wanted. Alex and I had visited Elena's house just once before, but we knew that it was still a work in progress. The walls were unfinished concrete slabs, the floors were unfinished, and, crucially, there were no security bars over the windows. The lack of such bars, necessary to prevent theft and other intrusions, had meant that Elena's windows had to be boarded up with plywood. Because she lacked electricity in most parts of the house to power lights or a fan, the boarded-up windows made her home dark and unbearably hot. Installing bars on her windows would have been a feasible STM work project, given the team's timeline and budget, and it would have significantly improved Elena and her family's quality of life. When Reinaldo, Alex, and I

arrived at Elena's house with the painting supplies, she came out to greet us, excited that the team was going to work on her house. Upon learning that the team had decided to paint her house, she asked, dumbstruck, "¿Vas a pintar mi casa? ¿Por qué pintan mi casa? No necesito que pinten mi casa." (You're going to paint my house? Why are they painting my house? I don't need my house painted.)

No one had asked Elena what she wanted. Despite having visited Elena's house several times previously, the team members seemingly did not remember that her walls were unfinished, and they lacked the cultural background to realize that bars over windows are a necessity in the Dominican Republic. The team was not prepared to purchase new materials, and Elena's young son was excited to have his room painted, so it was decided that they would use the supplies to paint her son's room. Reinaldo was tasked with prying the plywood from the windows in order to provide light and to allow air to circulate, so that the team would not suffocate from painting in an enclosed space. As he did so, sunlight and breeze flooded what had been a dark, humid room, a cruel reminder of what could have been. Reinaldo turned to me and joked that the error was my fault because I was the only white person there who was not a part of the STM team (Jason and Andrea were out of the country on sabbatical at the time). Although Reinaldo's comment was made in jest (he knew that I had no power over the mission), the humor only worked because it reflected the reality of inequality in STMs. Despite the prevalence of mission discourses that stress *alianza* (partnership) between Dominicans and Americans, STM decisions are mostly made in top-down fashion by white Americans, with little to no collaboration or input from Dominican employees such as

Reinaldo and Alex, who work with the community on the ground and know their needs firsthand. Moreover, as much as Americans believe themselves to exemplify work ethic and ingenuity, particularly in contrast to Dominicans, the failures and slow pace of STM work is frequently the result of Americans' errors, including miscommunication, mismanagement, and lack of cultural knowledge and project-related expertise. The good intentions behind STM projects often do not take into account local people's voices, expertise, and agency in regard to decisions made about their own homes and communities.

Corruption

Under the surface of their declarations of unity and equality, there is often a general, mostly unspoken suspicion among Dominican STM workers that Americans are simply unwilling to give money directly to local people. To the extent that this is true, it is largely because Americans are afraid of being scammed—a fear that is founded in longstanding paternalistic beliefs that poor people (and, by extension, poor nations) cannot be trusted to be responsible with money. American STM teams therefore consider it necessary to decide what they think is best for Dominicans, rather than being receptive to Dominicans' ideas and their ability to make such decisions for themselves. As I will explain further in Chapter 7, ideologies of gift-giving, particularly ideas and beliefs about giving cash directly to local people, are fraught with issues of power. These ideas and beliefs echo Lupton's (2011, 60) admonition that "relations built on need are seldom healthy" and that lack of accountability leads to mistrust. Although the formal STM discourses of sermons, group prayers, and promotional materials proclaim egalitarianism

and unity, Americans' informal everyday discourses promote wariness of the Dominican other. Young American women are warned not to be "sweet talked" by young Dominican men who may just be "after a green card." These warnings seem to be mostly unfounded and more likely based in racism and misogyny. I made the acquaintance of multiple American–Dominican married couples who had met during STMs (one had begun dating during my research), and all but one of these couples reside in the Dominican Republic, working for missions. Relatedly, there was much discussion among American male participants regarding the beauty of Dominican women, exemplifying objectification and exoticization of Black female bodies. Repeat STM participants and long-term missionaries alike tell cautionary tales to warn less experienced team members about being taken advantage of. Jason often told a story about the naïve generosity of one American who, over the course of a week-long STM, gave thousands of dollars to a local man who was not even part of the ABC church, from when the man first asked for help with buying food for his family right up through buying him a motorcycle.

For these and related reasons, American STM teams would rather spend money on the mission as an institution or to the missionary than give it directly to Dominicans. Notwithstanding all of these worries about being conned by poor Dominicans, though, deceptions and malfeasances on the part of American missionaries and STM organizers cause STMs to lose much larger sums of money. After spending enough time in the field, I discovered that rumors and accusations of corruption against missionaries and mission-overseeing organizations are rampant. The volunteer-tourism books warn that "aid foments corruption" (Lupton 2011, 95), although Lupton was mostly referring to the

corruption of local people. According to Andrea, many of her colleagues outside of ABC had become missionaries because they were considered unqualified to work for churches in the US. These factors contribute at best to the mismanagement of missions, and at worst to corruption, abuse of power, and harm.

Most of the accusations of corruption that I heard were vague, but virtually every mission with which I communicated, or that I knew of by reputation, was a target. These accusations came to me in hushed tones from all directions: from long-term missionaries based in the Dominican Republic, from members of visiting STM teams, and from Dominicans who worked closely with the mission organizations, for example. In most cases they were accusations of profiting from mission work, such as by overcharging or double-charging STM teams for goods and services. For instance, one organization charges teams $15 an hour per interpreter, but the interpreters with whom I spoke told me that they are paid the equivalent of $4 per hour for their services. Another organization charges teams for Manna packs, boxes of fortified rice produced by a Christian nonprofit organization called Feed My Starving Children, which the teams then distribute to needy people; the organization in question had received the Manna packs as a donation. These examples demonstrate the lack of transparency and even outright misinformation that are characteristic of some STM organizations. Other accusations involved embezzlement or fraud, in the form of either pocketing the over-charged money or not distributing sponsorship money to the intended recipients. A more serious claim was made against an organizer who owned multiple private villas in the exclusive resort owned by the sugar company. The claim was that he colluded with the sugar company for mutual advantage

by organizing STM projects that relieved the company of the responsibility and expense of providing basic necessities for its workers. These various allegations were made with varying amounts of evidence to back them up, but the common thread was the lack of accountability of these organizations and the lack of recourse for those negatively affected by them, exacerbated by the fact that the organizations operate transnationally and work with vulnerable people.

In the discussion of evil that opened this chapter, I alluded to a case of corruption that the Hope team attributed to the work of the devil. Their chosen interpretation erases the personal agency of Charles (who goes by Carlos), the American long-term missionary with whom they worked. The Hope team sent Carlos four STM groups per year, including three medical missions, at various times throughout the year, and a large youth group, in the summer, that focused on construction and VBS. For many years, the Hope team's primary project was the building of a medical clinic in an underserved community outside of town on a property that Carlos owned through the family of his Dominican wife. After a series of untoward events, including disappearance of funds and nepotistic hiring of Carlos's family members as superfluous caretakers for the property, the Hope team began to question Carlos's use of their money. Eventually they confronted him about it. He decided to announce his retirement on the spot in order to avoid further accusations and legal investigation. Looking to fund his retirement, Carlos then attempted to sell the Hope team the land where they had built the medical clinic—at a greatly marked-up price that reflected what they had invested into the structure. In effect, he was asking them to buy the building that they had already paid for and had constructed

themselves. The team tried to negotiate with him, but eventually decided to cut their losses rather than give Carlos any more money. After that experience, wary of partnerships with local missionaries, the Hope team worked with both ABC and DRM, which they believed provided greater accountability.

As these examples suggest, race-based paternalistic mistrust of local people, particularly in regard to handling of mission funds, makes STM projects vulnerable to mismanagement and corruption; and it also limits the funds available to be spent on local communities. The Dominicans who are hired by the missions are more than capable of running their medical clinics, construction projects, and vacation Bible schools, and mostly do so anyway. Joe's role in his own STM is mainly to pay for school supplies. Yet, despite having worked with the same churches and individuals for 12 years, he and his donors believe that it is important that Joe travel to the Dominican Republic each year and handle the money himself, rather than entrust it to local people. Joe states adamantly, though, that his own and his volunteers' expenses are paid out of their own pockets, rather than from the funds raised for school supplies.

Harm

Besides fearing being taken advantage of by Dominicans, Americans also fear that they may be physically harmed by local people or the local environment. Although it is antithetical to notions of Christian fellowship, Americans are wary when hugging or otherwise getting physically close to local people because they fear catching scabies or other infestations. Many senior STM volunteers tell tales of knowing someone who caught a mysterious exotic disease while on a mission. Most popular are stories of food

poisoning, though I never witnessed (or experienced) it myself. Such fears led one team to decline the coffee and juice that an elderly woman offered them during a medical clinic to thank them for their work. These fears extend beyond concerns about disease and uncleanliness to concerns about violence. In Haiti, it is common for STM teams to hire an armed guard for protection, and team members are sometimes barred from interacting with any Haitian adults, even in the communities that they are serving. On STMs in the Dominican Republic, American girls and women are warned that it is dangerous for them to walk around by themselves, without a trusted adult male. Jason tells teams that, at the movie theater, Dominicans will pull out their guns and shoot at the screen (something that I never witnessed or even heard of, except from him). Although Dominicans admit to the strong possibility of being mugged in their country, they feel that the United States is the more dangerous or at least the more violent of the two countries, due to the prevalence of mass shootings.

For Dominicans, the likelihood of harm runs in the opposite direction—that is, they must concern themselves with the possibility of being harmed by Americans. As I began to lay out in Chapter 2, from orphanages driving child abandonment to unqualified volunteers practicing medical procedures, long-term missions and STMs pose readily identifiable threats to local people's safety and well-being. The horrors perpetrated worldwide by long-term missionaries are increasingly documented in international headlines, including accusations of sexual abuse at orphanages. In 2018, the activist organization No White Saviors raised accusations against Serving His Children, a center for malnourished children in Uganda run by Renee Bach. Bach, who became a

missionary after her experiences as a teen on STMs, allegedly engaged in medical practice without a medical license or training, and 105 children died under her care. Bach fled Uganda before the case could go to trial. On Serving His Children's social media pages, Bach's supporters, many of whom claim to be former STM volunteers at Bach's mission, denounced the allegations as "fake news" and accused the bereaved Ugandan parents who were suing Bach of not "appreciating [Bach's] countless hours and her entire heart and soul she's put into [the organization]. [The accusers] see white dollars and want to capitalize on it." Elsewhere, commenters blamed the children's deaths on the doctors in Uganda, whom they accused of turning malnourished children away and of being ill equipped to handle more severe cases. Others claimed that the accusations are false, calling them a "spiritual" attack from the devil to stop Bach from saving children. One man wrote, "Your labor in the Lord is not in vain. There is a reward for your service in heaven." Another supporter affirmed Bach's foundation as divine, "See Colossians 4:17.[23] You were not called by man, but by God. Accusations are man made, and not from God." No comment was made in outrage or remorse over the deaths of the children. In just this small sample of the hundreds of such posts, Bach's evangelical supporters express a mistrust of Ugandans, who are portrayed as greedy and as "exploiting [Bach's] whiteness." In this last comment, the faulty logic of reverse-racism accusations is applied, without regard for the privilege that enabled Bach to flee the country or for the fact that she had yet to face charges (much less be tried or convicted). Any criticism of Bach's work is roundly dismissed as originating from the devil. These comments reflect

[23] "Tell Archippus: 'See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord.'"

the notion of a personal devil intervening in mission work as well as the problem of good. Bach's supporters absolve her of any accountability for the deaths of over one hundred children, which go entirely unquestioned because she is deemed to have been doing God's work, "laboring in the Lord."

ABC and DRM have put measures in place to help safeguard Dominican communities from such medical malpractice. The medical teams that I observed consisted mostly of nurses and some doctors; persons with no medical training were also on hand to perform such tasks as collecting patient intake information and dosing medication. DRM's teams are accompanied by Dominican doctors who are employed at DRM's local hospital. ABC does not have the same level of medical infrastructure; under Jason's leadership, they have scaled back on medical missions, including a moratorium on surgeries. "I don't want to be known as the mission that killed somebody," Jason explained. This peculiar phrasing implies that, for Jason, the worst possible outcome would be not a death, but the effect that it would have on his mission's reputation.

I did observe some potentially harmful practices at ABC and DRM medical clinics. Medications are dispensed to patients in rapid succession by Americans who typically speak little or no Spanish. Patients are handed multiple kinds of medication, usually in unmarked bags—sometimes up to 20 different kinds, if a parent is collecting for himself or herself as well as for children. The person in charge of the pharmacy station quickly rattles off instructions frequently across languages and only sometimes with the aid of an interpreter, such as "Take this large white pill once a day, and take this smaller white pill three times a day, eight hours apart, and this yellow pill two a day in

the morning," and so on. Most of the medications are of the over-the-counter kind, but some are prescription drugs, and the wrong combination or dosage could be harmful, potentially even deadly. American youths interested in studying medicine are often invited to assist with medical procedures, prioritizing the teaching of novices over patient safety.

Most mission clinics are entirely free to patients, but some teams charge a nominal fee for a check-up, with the design of teaching Dominicans a lesson about responsibility. Similarly, some mission-affiliated hospitals charge patients a subsidized fee for surgeries performed by American doctors, who believe that the patients are receiving their services for free. This results in numerous people being turned away from medical care because they cannot afford it, prioritizing the teaching of money-related moral lessons over the provision of medical care.

Good intentions also result in empty promises. During one Hope medical mission, a mother carried in her son, a young boy who had severe burns on his foot. She explained that she had taken him to an American-run clinic some time previously and had been told that they would pay for his surgery in the US, including airfare, if she would just obtain a passport for her son. The team then left at the end of their mission, without making any arrangements, helping her apply for a passport, or even leaving her their contact information. The woman thought that the Hope team was the one that had made this promise, but no one on the Hope team claimed to have seen her son during a previous mission. After much discussion and after trying to clarify the details, the team offered to give her the money to pay for the passport, on the condition that Pastor Ricardo or

another trusted person from the church accompany her and make sure that the money was spent as the team intended. During these discussions, it came out that she had already borrowed money to pay for the passport. After she left, with the details still up in the air, Dr. Javier arrived. He seemed confused by the team's complicated plans to pay for the passport, which did not take into account applying for a visa (a lengthy process that could very easily end in a denied application) or locating the original team in order to enlist their help with making the necessary travel and medical arrangements. "This is something that we can treat here," Javier told them. "It would be easier to pay for the boy to be operated on here." Despite the obvious complexities involved in arranging for the boy to be treated in the US, not one American had mentioned the possibility of treatment in the Dominican Republic, an indication of negative or dismissive attitudes toward Dominican doctors and hospitals. In cases such as this one, the lack of follow-through by American groups may be quite harmful. Pastor Ricardo's wife, Elsa, who rarely spoke out on STM-related issues, became very upset when she heard the story. She stressed that she believes the American groups to be well-intentioned, but she also believes that they do not think through what they say to people, and then they forget about it. Elsa made the point that it was all too likely that the mother had borrowed money to pay for the passport from a loan shark, which could potentially be ruinous for her, and in the end, had not even been necessary.

Conclusion

During my first summer of fieldwork, in 2013, ABC was working on opening their school. The local pastor, Fernando, and his wife, Iliana, an educator, had come up with

the idea and led the project. In the days before the school opened, with a great deal still left to accomplish, Jason and Andrea expressed their frustration with the couple's work, which they viewed as inefficient and ill prepared. Said Andrea,

> We don't want the school to fail, of course, or anything in the mission to fail, but we also kind of do want it to, in a way, so that they can see. Psychologically, we learn best from failure and our mistakes. We want it to succeed, but also want them to see better ways of doing. It's not that we want to come and change their culture as missionaries or say that we know the right and better way, but it really is.

By the time that I left the field for the final time in 2018, the school was wildly successful at providing affordable, quality education to underserved children in the neighborhood and was about to expand to include higher grades. Outside of American fundraising, which paid for new construction and Jason and Andrea's salaries, it was the mission's largest source of income, reaching Jason's goals of making Fernando's church self-sufficient and even covering a significant portion of the other ABC churches' expenses as well.

I conclude this chapter with this vignette because it provides a telling example of American paternalism and hubris, which, all too often, constrain Dominicans' agency, particularly in areas in which they are more than capable of improving their own situations. As much as Americans criticize Dominicans for inefficiency and lack of fiscal responsibility, they are in awe of Dominican resourcefulness and resiliency, often expressing this in the same breath. STM discourses are rife with such contradictions—for instance, Dominicans need to be saved, and Dominicans are immensely spiritual. Both of the examples just mentioned reveal an unwillingness to recognize Dominicans' abilities as well as an unwillingness to address the imbalances of power in STMs. As one

missionary intern told me, good intentions need to align with good outcomes. One STM leader told his group at the close of a mission, “We accomplished a lot and you should be proud…You may be back next year or never, but God used us for this perfect plan that was divinely ordained before we ever got here.” Evangelical understandings of evil and good intentions, including such notions as the personal devil and divine heroism, shape giving practices and limit the possibilities for accountability in the mission field by sanctifying missionary agency as divine. These ideologies ultimately have a stunting effect on STM practices, on participants’ worldviews, and on the communities that they hope to change. Rather than bringing about needed transformations, STM groups (re)produce popular, debunked discourses of poverty and globalization while focusing their attentions and efforts on make-work projects and misguided actions, and the cycle continues.

CHAPTER 7

GIFTS FROM GOD: POSTCOLONIAL (MIS)RECOGNITION AND EXCHANGE

Figure 12: Sugar cane is cultivated across the Dominican Republic, which produces over 500,000 metric tons of sugar each year.

Under the buzzing bright-white lights of the modern supermarket, the average American's shopping cart is likely filled with sugar-based products. Sugar is found in almost every grocery aisle: from the sugar section, where Domino Sugar dominates as the most commonly-used sugar brand in the United States, to the sodas and other beverages, to the desserts and candies. Processed sugar is less conspicuously an ingredient in many other food items, from yogurt and salad dressing to pasta sauce, cereal, and even soup. Added sugars are in 74% of the packaged food products stocked on supermarket shelves.

On average, Americans consume roughly 152 pounds of sugar each year. Added sweeteners come from a variety of sources, including beet and cane sugar and high-fructose corn syrup. At an average retail price of about 60 cents per pound, sugar is a relatively cheap product that provides mainly empty calories and stimulation of taste buds.

Far removed, both physically and mentally from the American shopper, are the sugar-cane fields in tropical climates, such as those found in the Dominican Republic, where workers live in small villages, spending their days toiling in the fields, cutting the cane with machetes and occasionally sneaking off a piece to suck on as a snack, and in leaner times, a meal. Although many industrialized advancements to sugar production have been made since colonial-era production, which relied on forced labor, the cultivation and harvesting of sugar cane is unwieldy and cannot be fully mechanized without sacrificing the cane's regrowth. For this reason, sugar production remains a labor-intensive process with high physical toll and myriad adverse health effects on workers. Since it takes about 10 pounds of sugar cane to produce one pound of refined sugar, sugar-cane fields stretch on for miles in every direction to satiate the high demands of the United States and other countries, rendering cane workers isolated and without access to basic amenities and resources, such as education.

On one visit to a batey, the Hope team decided to stop on their journey back into town and have a picnic lunch. As they sat on a small hill, next to some tin houses that looked out over the cane fields, the team commented on what they called "the dichotomy of the Dominican Republic." They described the juxtaposition the cane workers they had

just met, living in “abject poverty” but surrounded by “the most beautiful scenery.” According to the team, the bateyes were a paradisical Eden. In contrast to the white-savior narratives of the New World described in Chapter One, for the Hope Team, this was a fallen Eden. The team did not comment or speculate how this Eden had fallen. The team treated these dichotomies as unrelated, separate from the other. Yet, they are related: the tropical climate and landscape is required to cultivate sugar cane; the extreme poverty in the bateyes is the result of centuries of forced or underpaid labor. The Americans shopping under the fluorescent lights in the supermarket and the Haitian-Dominicans toiling under the sun in the sugar-cane field are indeed worlds apart, but they are also part of the same world. The market and the fields are both manufactured environments; the latter created to supply the former. American STM teams are complicit, not only through their consumption practices, but also because their mission work, in conflict with their intent, helps in some ways to sustain the whole system.

Overview of Chapter

To occupy their time on the long bus rides to and from their mission sites, American participants gaze out the windows at the fields upon fields of sugar cane. Many comment on the ways that the scenery reminds them of the corn fields that run along highways in the United States. Beyond the practice of monoculture, designed to produce cheap, filler substances that have detrimental health consequences, such as diabetes and obesity, the differences between corn and sugar cultivation and production are vastly different. In the first chapter of this dissertation, I briefly described Sidney Mintz’s (1986) account of the

rise of sugar production and consumption around the world in his book *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. Taking a Marxian approach, Mintz asserts that these structures of the colonial plantation, including forced-labor economies, changed history and shaped current forms of global capitalism and industry. He describes the production of sugar as "the most onerous of West Indian industries" (1985, 49). Over 11 million Africans were enslaved and countless indigenous lives were lost or destroyed for the purpose of producing sugar.

Although slavery was abolished in the Dominican Republic in 1822, Haitians were forcibly brought over in the 1920s to work in the fields. In the era of late capitalism, labor conditions have improved; still, workers remain underpaid with little recourse or escape from such a life. According to Ramón, a Haitian-Dominican coordinator of Dominican Republic Mission (DRM), "[The sugar-cane workers] are the poorest of everyone. Their life is very difficult […] people come here and say, this is slavery." Ramón's position mirrors that of the 2013 report by the U.S. Department of Labor as well as of human-rights organizations and of activists who assert that the conditions are tantamount to forced labor. Recent muckraking documentaries such as *The Price of Sugar* (2007) and *The Sugar Babies* (2007) depict Haitian and Haitian-descent laborers working fourteen hours a day under the watch of armed guards. According to these films, workers are paid around a dollar for a day's work, or at least when the companies do not withhold their wages, a coercive tactic, along with withholding their documents, used to prevent workers from freely leaving.

DRM's origin narrative tells a story of resistance to these exploitative conditions. DRM's website describes how its founder, a Haitian-born pastor, taught cane workers how to measure their own yield, as a measure to prevent the sugar companies from cheating them of their wages. Sugar companies often own the isolated bateyes and where the workers live. STM organizers reported that in the past, bateyes were sometimes cut off from their access to food as a form of punishment. After the 2013 ruling that revoked basic citizenship rights of hundreds of thousands of Haitian-Dominicans born in the country, the sugar companies seized the opportunity to deny undocumented workers their pensions. Those born on the bateyes have little chance of escape, as work in the cane starts at a young age. Undocumented Haitian-Dominicans are often barred from attending secondary school or university. Moreover, the government does not provide access to schooling in these remote areas beyond primary school, requiring students to travel great distances, often at a high personal cost in order to graduate high school. The lack of documentation among Haitian-Dominicans adds an additional barrier to finding work in the formal economy outside of the plantations.

These adverse social and economic conditions have drawn numerous STMs to the Dominican Republic, especially to the bateyes. DRM mission teams work mostly with Haitian-Dominican sugar-cane workers and their families in the bateyes, and All Because of Christ (ABC) teams work primarily in town where the refinery factory is located. ABC and DRM are based in a company town for a large sugar corporation that is a supplier for multiple sugar brands, including Domino Sugar. ABC STM teams provide various forms of aid and social services to factory workers and their families. A second ABC location is

in a popular tourism destination, where many of the Dominican and Haitian-Dominican participants work in the tourism and hospitality industry, or more often in the resulting informal economy that emerges at tourist sites. Some mission teams aim to ameliorate the barriers to workers' independence from sugar corporations that were outlined above. For instance, the Freedom team built a community garden so that batey residents could grow some of their own subsistence crops rather than solely relying on controlled access to marked-up food sold by the sugar company. DRM and affiliated organizations also facilitate access to education for children in the bateyes, such as by sending teachers or funding students' transportation to attend school. Teams at ABC and DRM have also built schools in town or rural areas that are run by ABC and DRM. Both ABC and DRM have college scholarship programs that fund tuition, transportation, and sometimes housing for recipients. However, the most common forms of mission work at ABC and DRM involve charitable giving, including giving food, building houses, and providing medical care for employees of sugar companies. Charitable gift-giving through ABC and DRM is entangled with other global processes, including trade and tourism. I propose that, under the conditions of late capitalism, charitable giving reflects and can even contribute to market economies in ways that (re)produce the colonial relations of exchange.

Throughout this dissertation, I have shown that STMs incidentally expose their participants to global and racial inequalities by introducing Americans to cultural and economic experiences vastly different from their own. The STMs that I study bring Americans face to face with cane workers on bateyes that supply the major brands that

they consume back home. In this way, the STM experience can "de-fetishize" commodities by connecting producers and consumers and making oppressive working conditions visible to consumers. For this reason, STMs have the potential to powerfully re-shape participants' worldviews, including their conceptualization of globalization, race, and economic inequality. In this chapter, I will examine the ways that STM participants are entangled with their recipients' economic situation, and the ways that they construct their charitable giving relations. STMs create a space for personal connections across culture, language, class, and nationality. However, STM discourses that construct poverty as an evil that is spiritually-driven rather than the result of human actions or institutions, erase the roles of postcolonialism and trade in global inequality. Paradoxically, discourses that take place during STM encounters often enhance the disconnection created by market economies and thereby limit effective action.

The underlying principles of STMs are potentially quite radical, yet more often, in practice, STMs are ineffectual of the true socioeconomic transformations necessary to break the cycle of unjust labor, which is often not even a goal of STMs. In addition to de-fetishizing sugar as a commodity, STM giving incidentally transforms social relations between actors already engaged in unequal economic relations at a global level into face-to-face relations of charity. In Chapter 1, I suggested that Americans' pre-existing global economic relations with Dominicans and Haitian-Dominicans (the results of colonial structures, US foreign policy, late-capitalist governance, and the trade of sugar) have trapped cane workers and created the need for face-to-face charity provided by American STM participants. Charitable gifts play an important role in market economies. Not only

are STM participants—through their consumption practices—complicit in the system of forced labor and oppression, but STM charitable giving, which is discursively framed as egalitarian, can even work to uphold and reinforce that system of inequality. Despite teams' good intentions to provide basic needs or even stand against these forms of oppression, STMs, along with other forms of volunteer-tourism, work in various ways to uphold existing postcolonial inequalities between countries sending and receiving aid. For example, the food and medical care that STM teams provide disincentivizes sugar companies from providing medical benefits or paying higher wages to their employees. Periodic giving of aid can also work to stave off worker's demands or quell unrest in the form of worker's strikes.

I begin the rest of this chapter with a brief theoretical overview of the study of gift and commodity exchange in anthropology, focusing on the theories of Mauss and Marx. I foreground Mauss' theory of gift exchange that describes gifts as part of a system in which both social solidarity and unequal power relations are achieved through face-to-face giving, receiving, and the obligation to reciprocate. I examine charitable giving, which has historically been omitted from Maussian gift exchange theory because charitable giving occurs between unequal parties, which impedes reciprocation, and thus, according to Douglas (2000), precludes solidarity. I integrate this conceptualization of charitable gift giving alongside Marx's theories of a market economy, in which commodities, such as sugar, are fetishized because their exchange is individual and alienated from social action and face-to-face relations.

I then turn my attention to gift-giving ideologies that are influenced by evangelicalism and late capitalism. STM participants rely on these gift-giving ideologies to determine who should receive a gift, what kinds of gifts are given, and how a recipient should respond to a gift. I also examine the ways that STM gift giving socializes religious values and produces moral subjectivities. According to Cole (2012), "The White Savior Industrial Complex is not about justice. It is about having a big emotional experience that validates privilege." Unlike traditional commodities, charitable aid is inalienable from the individual giver and accrues spiritual capital for donors and volunteers who occupy positions of privilege that are legitimized by their giving behaviors. I then consider how American and Dominican participants negotiate the exchange of charitable gifts and their unequal relationships with one another. In my analysis, I focus on the ways that participants negotiate unequal power relations in one-sided giving, that is, when gifts are given without the expectation or obligation to reciprocate. For instance, I consider the ways that STM participants promote evangelical giving ideologies that attempt to erase the unequal power relations between givers and recipients and create solidarity based in shared religious beliefs. One such example are the ways in which participants discursively construct the presence of a divine agent as the impetus of the charity. These discourses express powerful ideas about subjectivity, morality, and power, making STMs an important part of evangelical moral-subject formation and shaping of worldviews, especially concerning religion, power, and global economic class. Finally, I will illuminate how Americans reflect on their gift-giving behaviors, such as how they conceptualize their own place as social actors in the world.

(Mis)Recognition through Gift and Commodity Exchange

The anthropological study of gift exchange began with the discipline itself, starting with Malinowski, but a more comprehensive and expansive theory was articulated by Marcel Mauss in his seminal work, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (2000). In Mauss' armchair comparison of gift economies, such as the kula ring among Trobriand Islanders and potlatches in the Indigenous Pacific Northwest, gift exchange is a total social phenomenon that involves the collective society and gives expression to multiple institutions at once (2000, 4). On this theory, face-to-face gift exchange is essential to reproducing and maintaining social and economic networks. Mauss (2000, 59) asserts that gifts are part of a system in which social solidarity is achieved through recognition in the mutual obligation to give, receive, and reciprocate, which forges an "irrevocable bond." Mauss contends that gifts are imbued with the "spirit" of the giver, and this quality remains with the object as it is exchanged. In these and other ways, Mauss' articulation of gifts and giving within so-called "gift economies" are placed in contrast with Marx's theories on the trade of commodities that take place within market economies, where producers are alienated and removed from social action and commodities are fetishized.

The theorization of the similarities of social relations in gift-based and commodity-based societies has been explored through the study of labor under capitalism. Anthropological theories of labor as a system of exchange are influenced heavily by Marx, but are also inspired by Bourdieu's theories of habitus, in which specific values, dispositions, and skills are inculcated to a corresponding labor class.

These processes construct subject identities and class forms. Although Marx (1990) describes work as fundamental to human life, he also asserts that the emergence and division of labor under capitalism alienates and exploits human beings. Under this system, wage laborers are no longer connected to the products of their labor. According to Marx (1990), under commodity production, human relations take on relations between "things." This is exemplified through the relations between Americans and Dominicans with sugar prior to the STM encounter, which attempts to reattach the social bonds of exchange through gifts and personal connections. Alienation becomes salient for an analysis of capitalism as both an economic and social system because it reveals how modes of production of material life have shaped social life. Under this system of alienation, laborers lack the knowledge of the value of commodities, in what Willis (1981, 131) calls the "blindness" of laborers that conceals the process of exploitation and source of profit. Because STMs operate under the same cultural ideologies of capitalism, STMs cannot directly respond to de-fetishize the commodity, instead they involve the practice of face-to-face giving with laborers. For this reason, Americans ultimately fail to see their own underlying connection as consumers to the exploited conditions of the laborers in front of them.

Gift and market economies have historically been placed in opposition to each other. When converged, they are particularly useful for understanding the charitable giving that takes place under late capitalism, particularly during volunteer-tourism. Until recently, the study of morality and economics was synonymous with the study of non-capitalist, non-Western societies. In non-capitalist societies, such as those described by

Durkheim (1995), Mauss (2000), and Weiner (1992), morality is "eminently a social thing" (Durkheim 1995, 9): the moral concerns of the economy are considered to be social and are thus deeply ingrained into social relations. Non-capitalist, gift-based societies were previously placed by scholars in a false teleological dichotomy with capitalist, commodity-based economies. For his part, Mauss limits this divide because he sees gift exchange in gift economies as obligatory rather than voluntary. In contrast, gift giving during volunteer-tourism is by definition, voluntary, at least for the individual volunteer; at the same time, however, systems of charitable giving and social services ensure the smooth running of late-capitalist structures. In capitalist societies, such as those described by Marx (1990), Weber (1992), and Willis (1981), the economy's moral concerns are no longer located in the social collective of egalitarian exchange, and instead are relegated to the laws and institutions of the state. According to Greenhouse (2012, 3), "The social effects of neoliberalism pose a significant challenge to classic social theory—inverting Durkheim's thesis regarding interpersonal exchange as the building block of society." In deregulated capitalist societies, the moral concerns of the economy are in flux between society and the state; corporations and the individual are emphasized as responsible for providing for social needs. More recently, anthropologists who study late capitalism have tried to reconcile the perceived dichotomy between gift and commodity exchange. For instance, scholars such as Bornstein (2005) and Goode (2006) have asserted that charitable giving is crucial to reproducing the conditions of late capitalism.

Charitable giving practices such as those that take place during STMs complicate Maussian gift exchange theory because the relations within charitable giving are, by design, not egalitarian and cannot have reciprocal exchange, or at least straightforward or equal reciprocation. In fact, Maussian gift exchange theory confronts the Western notion of the "pure gift" or altruism, by demonstrating that gifts can never be free of an ulterior motive. According to Mauss, giving is part of a system in which social solidarity is achieved, and thus ultimately self-serving. On Maussian theory, reciprocation is perhaps the most critical component for cohesion and solidarity within interpersonal exchange because without reciprocation, power relations are left unequal. In response to Mauss' shortcomings on the social dynamics of charitable giving, recent anthropologists have accounted for charitable giving. These arguments avoid constructing reciprocation as an abstract norm that constrains behavior, and position charitable gift giving as a process in which people become bound to one another.

Building on this more recent scholarship, I seek to demonstrate how charitable giving can help to reinforce systems of commodity exchange under late capitalism, and conversely, how charitable giving can also have the potential to disrupt these same systems. STM giving helps to provide for cane workers, such that they keep producing under the conditions of late capitalism, a "utopia of exploitation" (Bourdieu 1998). At the same time, Bourdieu (1998) claims that late capitalism mystifies power and is treated as a belief system with articles of faith. I have made the case that STM discourses express neoliberal tropes of social and economic behaviors as moral and religious beliefs and values. In Chapters 3 and 4, for example, I described STM participants' moralizing

narratives of the culture of poverty that expound on hegemonic values, such as hard work, and that normalize poverty as a personal failure. Similarly, I showed how late-capitalist tropes such as personal responsibility are mystified, or made sacred and legitimized as divinely inspired through religious rituals, narratives, and texts. Religion has the potential to work within economic structures and class dynamics to serve as a means for social mobility and change, and yet at the same time religion has been fundamental to the success of (re)producing the practices of capitalism. Despite the introduction of capitalism and the decline of social welfare under late capitalism, countries such as the Dominican Republic have seen a rise in religious practices, especially among Christian groups. Social changes brought on by modernization breed religious changes; in this case, the growth of STMs. Although STMs provide greater awareness to Americans, that awareness is limited and disconnected from their everyday practices back home. Additionally, American's actions are constructed as "well-intentioned" or divine heroes. These understandings of moral agency work to absolve participants from most of the harm that may be caused by STMs. Ultimately, gift giving during STMs socializes a moral subjectivity that is integral to the misrecognition of global class inequalities as well as to the normalization of charitable giving behaviors over alternative actions, which many be more effective, albeit more complex.

In *The Social Life of Things*, Arjun Appadurai (2003) shows "how commodities and gifts may circulate across different contexts, thus making the case that things exchanged in one sphere do not necessarily 'belong' to that realm of exchange alone" (Browne and Milgram 2009, 10). In her ethnographic research on Oceanic societies,

Annette Weiner (1992, ix) demonstrates that "reciprocal gift exchange is actually surface phenomena constructed out of a deeper social priority that can never solve but only approximate the central issues of social life: 'keeping while giving.'" Gift giving in the context of STMs is thusly about deeper relations of commodity exchange. How can Americans "keep" their system of commodity exchange from which they benefit, *by* giving aid? The modes of production of sugar as a commodity, which rely on the State and global markets, influence the movement of people and ideas through STMs. Sugar can be bought cheaply at American stores, but it comes at a high price for cane workers who rely on the medical care, housing, and food that is given as a charitable gift by STM teams indirectly in lieu of paying sugar workers fair prices that would adequately compensate them for their work. The socially-binding forces behind any exchange—gift or commodity—are powered by the need for mutual recognition (Robbins 2009). Recognition and exchange play a foundational role in the formation of subjectivity and social life. According to Robbins (2009, 54), "[Philosopher Axel] Honneth argues that one's wages reflect social recognition of one's work. To be undercompensated or unemployed because your skills are not valued is to be unrecognized in the economic sphere." Wages typically (or are supposed to) to recognize recipients' agency and work, but social services and charity mostly reflect recognition of recipients' class position, which can make charitable relations disempowering. According to Mauss (2000), gifts create and maintain a strong social bond between the donor and the recipient and therefore is an essential tool for creating alliances and for avoiding conflict. In essence, STM giving creates alliances between disparate groups of people, through shared

religious beliefs and practices as a singular social bond between them. STM participants mostly evade conflict through the sacralization of STM gifts, which erases pre-existing connections, deflects personal agency through discursive acts of performative humility, and sacralizes the act of giving. In contrast to traditional Maussian gift exchange, which was theorized as occurring between equals, charitable giving during STMs inverts the dominant global socioeconomic order and exposes the relations of dependency that underpin postcolonial power dynamics. STMs provide opportunities for recognition of what is typically far removed from everyday American life, both geographically and conceptually—the origins of food, the conditions of postcolonial countries outside of the resorts, the lives of the people who live there and take part in a system that supplies American subsistence and luxuries. Under late capitalism, anthropologists have examined the ways that exchange has given rise to alienation. In the Hegelian tradition, exchange is fundamental to shaping human personhood through mutual recognition. According to Robbins (2009, 54), "economic action is motivated by enhancement of the self without regard for the other." Where then does this leave charitable exchange, which, despite criticisms of altruism, regards the other and also recognizes those who are typically not recognized. Recognition, and more often misrecognition, are central to STM and religious service encounters.

Needy or Greedy? Gift Giving Ideologies

Gift-giving ideologies necessarily arise during gift giving. Donors rationalize when, what, to whom, and how much they should give. These underlying rationalizations are not always articulated or acknowledged and can often be inconsistent. Sometimes giving

charity is circumstantial—for instance, one may find themselves to be more likely to give money when they have easily accessible change on hand or when around social peers. It can also be emotional, based on personal mood or social connection. Whatever the reason, when, what, and how much one gives can seem quite random and dependent entirely on the power and arbitrary whims of the giver.

STMs are specifically designed around providing aid. Because American teams on STMs perceive virtually everyone in their host country to be in need relative to their own circumstances, teams constantly make micro-decisions about who receives what over the course of the encounter. For this reason, participants often consciously express gift-giving ideologies through STM discourses, which are subject to frequent change over the encounter and may even prove inconsistent or contradictory. In Chapter 6, I examined the type of aid that Americans give and showed that STM aid, such as donating broken items or volunteering to paint houses, more often functionally serves to satisfy the giver's sense of moral responsibility rather than meeting recipients' lived needs. Gift-giving ideologies of who is "deserving" of a gift permeate the STM encounter. Gift-giving ideologies are culturally patterned and are shaped by such evangelical values as generosity, as well as neoliberal tropes concerning perceptions of poverty, "deservingness," gratitude, and agency that I have discussed at length in earlier chapters. Some teams explicitly articulate their rationalizations as part of the mission, and teams may at times consider or even prioritize Dominican's input. However, most teams' only ever express their gift-giving ideologies implicitly, and the decisions are made by Americans or officials at ABC or DRM, without much consideration or feedback from

Dominicans and Haitian-Dominicans. STM participants express ideologies of gift-giving relations, including expectations for the ideal recipient. Dominicans play a complex agentive role through their acts of reciprocation, or by taking up these ideologies on their own, and (re)producing, influencing, and challenging them. Gift-giving ideologies and the ways that these ideologies are taken up reveals how missionization, specifically the disbursement of aid, unfolds on the ground.

I found similar, underlying ideologies across all of the STM groups that I observed. Overall, STM ideologies of giving are influenced by tenets of Christianity that are expressed in the Bible, such as compassion and mercy. The Bible assigns a value and moral capital to people who give. For example, giving pleases God and givers are more blessed than those who receive (Acts 20:35). The figure of Christ as a sacrifice is typically understood as the ultimate gift to the world, in the form of forgiveness from God. There are also many models for charitable giving in Christianity, such as the promotion of the practice of tithing, or giving 10% of one's wealth. Some of the names of the teams that I observed reference stories from the Bible. For instance, the Good Samaritan team is influenced by the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), another Biblical reference to giving. Specifically, the Good Samaritan tells the story of helping a foreigner in need, not unlike American STMs in the Dominican Republic. Gift-giving ideologies can reinforce unequal power relations between givers and receivers by assigning a moral agency, such as good intentions to American participants. Aid is also frequently constructed as gifts or blessings.

American mission teams frequently cite examples from the Bible that sanctify their giving behaviors. Their notions of receiving are frequently influenced by tropes of neoliberalism, including notions of deserving poor and undeserving poor, personal responsibility, and culture of poverty. Americans rely on these class tropes to distinguish between two types of receivers—those who are in need and "deserve" aid, which is contrasted with those who feel "entitled," a word that is typically used in a negative way by Conservatives in the US who are opposed to social welfare or other services. Those who act entitled are treated as "greedy" or otherwise "undeserving" of aid. For instance, the Making a Difference team discussed what they called a "gimme attitude" among poor Dominicans, which implies that requests for aid are rude or demanding. They compared this attitude to their understanding of poverty in the US, which was largely shaped by culture of poverty theories, especially negative stories of welfare recipients that are popular in the US. According to Kelsey, "It's the ones who don't work and don't go to church who want [us to give them money], and it's like that in the US too with welfare. It's a culture of poverty because it is easier to just stay home and get a check. My husband works at an inner-city school, and when he asks his students what they want to do when they grow up, they say, 'go on welfare.'" The next day, when some of the children were excluded from receiving school supplies because they arrived at the church late, Jason mirrored back and affirmed the ideologies expressed the night before as a moral lesson. According to Jason, the "faithful kids always arrive early" for STMs, but others who arrive late "show up just for [the aid, and] don't follow Christ." In this way, cultural ideas of responsible behaviors, such as punctuality, are attributed moral and also

spiritual capital. Primary school students who arrive on time are constructed as “faithful” and are contrasted with children who Jason says prioritize receiving free material goods over religious salvation. Similarly, Jason tells STM groups that teenagers will volunteer with the mission because they “have good hearts” but that many of the adults were “volunteering to be rewarded with food and gifts.” Americans frequently use cultural norms of responsibility to justify the disbursement or withholding of aid.

STM giving ideologies also re-entextualize dominant cultural discourses of poverty that emphasize need. For instance, prior to their 2013 mission, the Making a Difference team circulated popular media on aid, including articles from the evangelical magazine *Christianity Today*. The photographs and texts circulated prior to the mission became standards of poverty and development. In contrast, what the team members encountered on the ground in the Dominican Republic did not always correlate with the discourses of poverty represented in these articles. Team members would frequently discuss their surprise at how “well-off” they perceived Dominicans to be, in contrast to popular representations of poverty. The team questioned why certain children received school uniforms from their mission, when it seemed to them as if many could afford a stylish personal wardrobe, as evidenced by their day-to-day clothes. Kelsey, in comparing her experiences on a mission in Africa compared Dominican clothing to descriptions of “Africa” that she received from Compassion International, a child sponsorship agency. According to Kelsey, these promotional materials described Africans as “lucky to have even a shirt” She continued, expressing her disappointment that Dominicans did not match her assumptions of their needs: “I thought we would be helping people who had

nothing." For Kelsey and others, Dominicans did not always adequately map onto their ideologies of poverty because some already wore nice clothing. That many Dominicans already had relatively nice everyday clothes, meant to some on the team that Dominicans should take responsibility to purchase their children's necessary school uniforms on their own instead of putting their money toward non-required, more fashionable wares. Ultimately, Kelsey expressed that she would go to Africa for her next STM because she believed that the continent represented a "real need."

Teams also circulate anecdotes that moralize personal responsibility and try to apply their own circumstances and cultural knowledge to the Dominican Republic. For instance, Kelsey criticized children for selecting tightly fit shirts, which she dismissed as a trendy style. She suggested that Making a Difference only buy larger shirts that would fit the children for the next school year as well. She also expressed disappointment that families did not recycle the uniforms by passing them down to their younger siblings, remarking that she frequently wore used clothing as a child. By comparing Dominicans' consumption behaviors to her own, she depicts Dominicans as irresponsible with money and less enterprising. In the Dominican Republic, far from being a youthful trend, a tight fit is culturally preferred to loose-fitting shirts, which are considered disorderly and informal, making the style inappropriate for school. Additionally, because most Dominican children only receive one pair of pants and one shirt that are to be worn every day for the entire school year, the uniforms are mostly threadbare by the end of the school year and cannot be re-worn the next.

STM teams decide who should receive gifts according to their perceived moral agency. In particular, children who receive uniforms and school supplies from the Making a Difference team must qualify to do so by achieving good grades in school and regularly attending an ABC church. Often when Joe is buying school supplies, he is approached by children and their parents at the store who ask for his help. Joe turns them down, but not without first informing them how they can participate in the program the next year by attending the ABC church. In this way, Making a Difference has been one of ABC's most successful forms of outreach because it has significantly increased church attendance among children and youths by word of mouth, and also, but to a lesser scale, has attracted the children's parents. This form of STM giving incentivizes religious participation. Students earn their new uniforms and supplies through qualifying moral behaviors. For those who qualify, these supplies are then given equally per student. The Making a Difference team explicates these rules, and entrusts Dominican leaders, such as the pastors and church elders to help determine how many spaces go to each church and whether children have "earned" the gift of school supplies. Due to limited funds, each ABC church is allotted a certain number of spaces, which is decided by Joe, with some input from Jason and the Dominican pastors. Joe's attempts as an outsider to provide funds equally, does not always account for insider insight into more equitable distribution. For instance, Joe rationalizes that since the two Haitian churches at ABC have a smaller congregation than the predominantly Dominican churches, they should receive fewer spots. As I described in Chapter 4, the Haitian churches are often sidelined

by ABC and typically receive less funding. Although the Haitian churches are smaller in size, their members on average have a greater financial need.

The most notable example of the deserving/undeserving dichotomy is the overwhelming provision of aid to children, rather than adults. Americans playing with young children and giving them aid are among the most iconic images of volunteer-tourism. On one hand, Americans find it easier to approach children rather than adults because of the inherent inequality of age. Giving to other adults exposes the unequal global relations of power that exist between them. Children also represent an innocence and are not held to the same standards of personal responsibility as adults, and are therefore, more deserving. Although, it is important to note that Dominican children are still held to higher standards than the team's own American children, as evidenced by their expectations of faithfulness and punctuality. Despite their criticisms of the Dominican government and sugar corporations, Americans simultaneously hold Dominican adults somewhat accountable for their situation, frequently expressing that Dominicans could find better work, work more, or manage their money better. The younger and more outgoing children receive much more attention from the Americans and accordingly also receive more gifts from them. For example, Good Samaritan team leader, Kristi, brought school uniforms and supplies that were specifically intended for children that she had bonded with the year before. Those who had been more reserved around Kristi were left empty-handed. Similarly, when the Good Samaritan team spent the afternoon at an orphanage, the children were less responsive to the team's presence than the children that the team had encountered in the bateyes. Because the orphans did

not express interest in playing with her, Kristi cut short the team's time at the orphanage. Although the Good Samaritan team had brought gifts with them to the orphanage, Kristi believed that the children should not be rewarded for their lackluster welcome, so they left without giving any of the gifts.

Young Dominicans (re)produce many of the same gift-giving ideologies both during and after STM encounters. For example, Making a Difference sometimes gives a small budget to students enrolled at university for them to spend on school clothes and supplies. Unlike with the school children who were restricted to purchasing only their school's specific uniform and a set supply list, the university students had more freedom over how they spent the money. The lax rules made space for a debate among Americans and Dominicans over what was considered appropriate spending. Their discussions reveal underlying ideologies of personal responsibility, as well as gender expectations. On separate occasions, several young women were criticized for their desire to purchase multiple pairs of high-heeled shoes. Joe and the other Americans expressed their disappointment that the young women wanted to purchase something that the team saw as unnecessary for school; they considered high-heeled shoes to be financially irresponsible, and thus disrespectful of the team's gift. This type of materialist consumption, *i.e.*, the purchase of luxury items rather than providing for basic needs, defied the team's expectations of Dominican's contentedness with a simple life that I described in Chapter 3. Yet, rather than a moral subjectivity, this simple life has always been the result of necessity. The criticisms over stilettos also reflect gendered moral ideologies because such shoes do not align with American evangelical beliefs about

femininity, which stress modesty and reflect American dress codes that aim to control women's bodies and sexuality by regulating their appearance. In contrast, Reinaldo's decision to purchase multiple pairs of stylish sneakers, was criticized by the Making a Difference team, but not to the point of intervention. Jason or one of the Dominican pastors would talk to the offending young woman and emphasize the value of the gift to help with their education, and suggest or direct them to exchange the high heels for other more "essential" items. Sometimes the other university students would intervene themselves, reminding each other about the value of the gift that they had received. On one occasion, a group of students physically removed the shoes from a woman's cart, shaming the offending student. Their sharp reproach reproduced the moral ideologies espoused by Making a Difference, such as responsibility for one's education, respect, and gratitude. Later, the other university students apologized to Joe, telling him that they were ashamed of her behavior.

Gift-giving relationships, both egalitarian and inegalitarian, are expected to follow local social norms. In the US, recipients are neither supposed to expect or request a gift. For instance, although it has become acceptable for an American couple to provide a registry list for their wedding, to request cash gifts is still considered by some to be a faux pas because the request violates the social obligation that underpin egalitarian giving relations. In contrast, during STMs, it is often necessary to make direct requests for aid in order to make needs known. STM teams navigate these requests by creating a sanctioned time and space for giving during the encounter. Giving almost exclusively takes place at the end. This, in effect, can work to foreground the social relations between Americans

and Dominicans as a separate relationship from charitable gift giving. Yet, the anticipation of gift giving looms over the encounter in various ways. By initially withholding gifts, Americans require Dominicans to participate in evangelization, form a social relationship with them, and follow their prescribed moral behaviors. ABC and DRM select recipient communities, and most aid is distributed according to a pre-ordained order. Requests for help that take place outside of these boundaries are typically denied and considered an affront because they transgress giving norms. Expressions of need expose the tensions between voluntary giving and the moral obligation to give to those who are suffering, which is at the heart of divine heroism. Direct requests for aid temporarily emphasize the disparate power relations between Americans and Dominicans that are the basis for the encounter. As I described in Chapter 6, although poverty is constructed as central to the encounter, *inequality* is not explicitly acknowledged beyond comparisons of life in the US and the Dominican Republic. What's more, the relational aspects of inequality are willfully ignored. For that reason, requests for help can be unsettling for Americans because they expose the vast inequalities between their worlds. It is common when teams are in public to be approached for money. When a young boy asked an American woman, Rachel, for money and she retorted, "What about me? Do you have money for me? Then, no [I don't have money for you]." Her reaction is contradictory to the expressed purpose of the mission to provide humanitarian aid. On closer inspection, the boy's request mirrors similar requests that Rachel might encounter in the US. In these more familiar charity encounters, Americans revert to their cultural practices, such as questioning the authenticity of the need and casting the people asking

for help as underserving. It is not uncommon during STMs for teams to narrate cultural myths of charity that are common in the US, such as of homeless people who make more money in charity than STM participants do at their job, or of the drug addict or alcoholic who refuses offers of food and requests money that participants believe will be spent procuring illicit items that perpetuate their cycle of poverty. These stories are told by teams during STMs to justify their giving decisions that limit aid to pre-selected participants who have been deemed in need according to Dominican organizers and morally worthy due to their hard work in the bateyes and religious affiliation with ABC or DRM.

STM charitable giving relations are fraught with inequalities but are conducted under the ideal of egalitarianism. For this reason, the process of giving and receiving gifts is precarious and the rules and ideologies are contradictory and ever shifting. Americans must strike a balance between their moral obligation and limited means. Dominicans must similarly carefully express their needs without appearing demanding. For example, the Good Samaritan team provides a medical check-up and medications. They also bring toiletries, clothes, school uniforms, and toys. Because the team does not have enough of these items to give to the roughly 2,500 patients that they see over the course of two weeks, they have to be selective when giving them out. As an unspoken rule, the Good Samaritan team refrains from giving aid to people who straightforwardly ask them for something. For instance, one day, as the team was packing up supplies inside a church, the Haitian-Dominican children outside reached their arms through the open windows, with their palms face-up to receive a gift. The nurses gave them nothing, remarking, "Oh

they know that we're done, so they are just trying to take all that they can get away with now." Unlike the Making a Difference team who listened to the advice of Dominican church leaders, the Good Samaritan team retained complete control. The very disparate power relations between Americans and Dominicans can make both groups uncomfortable, particularly when their gift-giving relationship is explicitly acknowledged by Dominicans. Asking directly for something as simple as a toothbrush violates Americans' expectations of the encounter. Explicitly asking for aid, even during an event that is designed to provide aid, creates disjuncture, wherein the underlying and unresolvable tensions and contradictions in a social system are exposed. American's power over the encounter is more fully revealed when they are put in the position to grant or deny Dominicans' requests for basic necessities. For Americans, this power is quite complex and is not without guilt or unease, especially when this power is acknowledged by Dominicans.

Americans largely reject Dominicans' attempts to ensure that the aid they are given meets their needs. As one American participant writes in her journal, "I think about the bateyes [,] and how on one hand, people seemed so desperate that they would take anything[,] but yet on the other hand, they were so proud, they wanted a choice of clothing to be given. One extreme to the next." This attitude reflects the cultural tropes and myths of come charity in the US outlined above and reproduces the adage that beggars cannot be choosers. To prevent negotiation, most teams hand out goods only at the end of their mission. On the last day in one batey, the Freedom team distributed used clothing randomly to whoever happened to be nearby, without concern for the size of

clothing. One Haitian-Dominican woman was given a couple of skirts. She asked through an interpreter whether the team had any pants to give her instead because she did not wear skirts. The team dismissed her request as rude and ungrateful. In their last act, the team handed out large sacks of fortified rice to each house in the batey. Due to miscommunication, the team accidentally handed out multiple bags to the same houses, leaving them without enough rice to give to every home. The Americans decided to return to the homes that had accidentally received multiple bags to ask for some to be returned so that they could distribute it to families who had not received any. However, the recipients became agitated and did not want to return the rice. The team was insulted by this rejection and became angry that they were "ungrateful" and "greedy." Ramón, the Haitian-Dominican coordinator assuaged the team by promising that he would return in the next week to make sure everyone received rice, but because of this event the team began to question whether they would return to this batey the next year and what they perceived as their unwillingness to share with one another.

Charitable giving relations, because they are mostly one-way flows of exchange, are precarious, especially for recipients who are closely scrutinized for what they might say and do. Recipients must strike a balance of building a relationship and making their needs known. As I described in Chapter 6, American participants are often skeptical of Dominicans' motives and sincerity in building personal relationships. The ideals of fellowship are of lateral social relations, yet they coincide with charitable giving roles that are largely unidirectional, as there is no straightforward reciprocation. For that reason, friendship between Americans and Dominicans during volunteer-tourism can be very

tenuous. For example, Kelsey warned the rest of her group of insincere motivations that she said she had encountered on her previous mission in Africa. She recounted how the people there "always asked for phone numbers from Americans because then they would call and ask them for money." Kelsey described how a young woman whom she had met and connected with on the trip later reached out to her by the messaging service WhatsApp and asked her for money. Expressing her disappointment, Kelsey explained, "I thought I was giving her my number to be friends." The request for money made Kelsey feel that the entire friendship had been false and manipulative to gain access to aid. This interpretation ignores the complexity of encounter friendships. For instance, Dominicans sometimes ask their American friends for money because religiously inspired giving was the precedent and very basis for their encounter and giving is a tenet of fellowship in the Bible. Second, the breakdown between Kelsey and the young woman could reveal differences in cultural understandings of friendship. As social constructions, friendship ties, expectations, and roles will invariably be conceived, organized, and utilized differently across cultures. Americans often praise what they call Dominican's sense of community and love for one another because they believe that Dominicans share what little they have with their friends (although the mistaken rice disbursement indicates otherwise, which in part explains why the team was so upset). Yet, unlike relations among Dominicans, which are perceived as egalitarian, the severe imbalance between Americans and Dominicans threatens the relationship. Kelsey's sentiment calls into question the possibility of lateral social relations alongside charitable giving.

Negotiation, Gratitude, and Reciprocity

Gift exchange is always embedded in structures of power. As Halperin (2009, 101) explains, the forms of gift exchange that take place in her research on extreme charitable gifting do not fit neatly into "any conventional anthropological usage," which has mostly focused on egalitarian exchange. According to Halperin (2009, 101), in the context of her research, "reciprocation would be inappropriate and border on insult. To reciprocate would violate the moral realities of working-class culture that constructs gifts as necessities." Mauss' preoccupation with reciprocity seems to have led to a neglect regarding what happens when a gift is not, or cannot be, reciprocated. Charitable giving does not allow for straightforward, equal reciprocation as predicated by anthropological theories of gift exchange; however, that does not mean that forms of reciprocation do not take place, nor that recipients are entirely without power. STMs, as cross-cultural encounters, involve a mutual recognition of the other through giving. In many ways, Dominicans are constructed in a dichotomous and unequal relationship with Americans. Although STM relationships are asymmetrical, participant roles afforded by STMs can create more complex negotiations for power. During economic outreach, participants must navigate the inequality of their social relations, and Dominicans often seek creative, alternative forms of reciprocation. Reciprocity is an especially salient notion in STM giving because it can provide micro-opportunities for Dominicans to assert some power over the encounter.

Even in contexts of charity where recipients of gifts are not obligated to reciprocate, a kind of reciprocation still takes place. In some cases, the reciprocation

takes on a tangible form, such as a good or service. Dominican and Haitian-Dominican women offer to braid American women's hair in a style typical of the Dominican Republic or give them handmade bracelets; both of these examples are also typical services and goods of the country's tourism industry. In another example, the children at one of the ABC churches put on a special performance for Making a Difference at the end of each mission. Joe is invited to speak, and the team is given gifts, typically tourist goods, such as a mug or shirt featuring Taino art. In the bateyes, children will offer to take Americans on a tour of their village, offering them fresh sugar-cane and limoncillos. Members of team are sometimes hesitant to try the fruit for fear of food poisoning, such as the team in Chapter 6 who declined the coffee and juice prepared by a Dominican woman as a gesture of hospitality and thanks. However, at least a few Americans will tentatively accept the item, because rejecting the gift violates norms of exchange. These gestures constitute forms of cross-cultural exchange and hospitality, to share Dominican sights, tastes, and culture with Americans in an effort to make them feel welcomed and accepted.

Dominicans' gifts can even precipitate the aid, in a way that obligates Americans to reciprocate. For instance, one day an eleven-year-old boy repeatedly approached the Good Samaritan team members, asking them for a bar of soap. It was not until the end of the day, that one nurse, Cara, finally gave the boy some soap. When the other nurses reproached her, questioning this gift since it transgressed the unspoken rules of giving, Cara rationalized her decision to them it in terms of reciprocation, justifying that the boy had helped the team by keeping the other kids calm and out of the way of the medical

staff. Cara’s reasoning reflects the approach taken by Making a Difference, in which children earn their gifts through moral actions. Dominican giving and reciprocation can also take fewer tangible forms, such as social relationships. For Kristi and others, social bonds must precede the distribution of gifts. Dominicans are very aware of many of the criteria on which gift-giving is based—to be friendly, to be in need, to be deserving, and to be grateful. That does not mean that children’s willingness to play with Americans, or Dominicans’ gestures of hospitality and service, are all carefully-crafted manipulations, purely motivated to receive something in return. Yet, at the same time American giving ideologies are explicitly acknowledged and resisted by Dominicans in front of Americans. For example, Sebastian, a young Dominican man who often coordinates the Good Samaritan’s mission, gave a speech one night to the team, reminding them that “all of the children in the bateyes are deserving of a chance, not just the cute ones that play with you.”

Interrogating the forms of reciprocity during charitable giving can reveal opportunities for recipients to negotiate their power. For example, taking photographs, particularly “selfies” with young children, is a common activity among American teams. In their ubiquity across social media, these photos are iconic of the volunteer-tourism narrative. Photo-taking during volunteer-tourism makes visible the disparate power relations between Americans who are the acting subjects, taking the photographs, and Dominicans, often children, who become objectified. However, Dominicans also assert agency through photo-taking. For example, sixteen and eight months pregnant, a young undocumented Haitian-Dominican woman named Ana had accompanied the Making a

Difference team to assist the team with the younger children. This was a common practice among some of the church's older youths. Because Ana had not received the minimum grades in school required by the mission team, she had not qualified to receive her own uniform or supplies. So, she watched day after day as her peers were gifted uniforms. At the end of the week, Ana with her own camera in hand approached Joe, gesturing that she wanted to take a photograph with him. Joe later expressed to me that he thought that it was strange request, and that he felt uncomfortable taking a photograph with Ana because he had not previously interacted with her, even though she had been with the team all week. Nevertheless, he agreed to take one with her. Almost immediately after the photograph had been taken, Ana asked Joe if she could also receive a uniform and supplies. Not wanting to tell her no directly, since he usually left this task to the ABC pastors or church elders, Joe told her that he would look at his budget, and then proceeded to avoid her the rest of his time there. Joe recounted the exchange with others in his group many times, miming a fishing motion, indicating that he felt Ana was trying to "reel him in" by requesting a photo. Ana's attempt failed in part because it was too transparent in its timing. Meneley (1996) asserts that during reciprocation, the incorrect timing, strategy, or style can lead to a breakdown of the process. Although this story exemplifies a failed attempt, it demonstrates that Dominicans like Ana are aware of the relationship between gift giving and photo-taking during the STM encounter. Knowing that she is ineligible based on other criteria, Ana requests a photograph with the STM's leader in the hopes that she could earn merit through this expression of a social bond.

Reciprocation can also take the form of hospitality, which is a common theme in the literature of anthropological gift exchange, especially in the Middle East and North Africa, such as Meneley's (1996) *Tournaments of Value,* among others. Hospitality also plays an important role during STMs. As STMs are tourist encounters, the Dominican Republic and Dominican participants play host to the visiting teams. Building relationships with Dominicans that are based on fellowship and friendship when they are so far from home is especially meaningful. American STM participants frequently experience culture shock as well as miss their families and the comforts of home. One DRM participant, Amy, reflects on this in her journal:

> We had another Sunday service in the remains of [the batey] church—again there was no roof and no windows and rubble littered the floor. We celebrated the joy of the Holy Spirit amongst us during the sacrament of Communion. In order for our group to participate, bottled grape juice, a box of crackers and small plastic cups had to be purchased by the church. This probably cost the church at least a Haitian cane cutters [sic] wage for one day! I hadn't even thought of this until an eighteen year old boy […] commented on how much this must have cost the church. This so touched me that I started to cry[...] For I was part of a group of total strangers to these Haitian people and they went out of their way for us. True Christian love and hospitality in action just as it is written in 1 Peter 4:8-11.[24]

Hospitality provides an opportunity for role reversal where Dominicans can assert their own autonomy and authority by giving and caring for Americans. As Amy reflects on, such gestures of hospitality are moral acts because of the significant cost to the hosts. Hospitality can be a way for Dominicans to show their gratitude and to reciprocate

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[24] [8] Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. [9] Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. [10] Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. [11] If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God.

through acts instead of goods. For instance, one night after dinner at the DRM compound, an older staff member came over and offered to collect the Good Samaritan team's dishes. One woman remarked to the group, "This is why this place is my home. It's these little gestures and moments that are so special." The employee's act of clearing their table, typical of the service industry, was interpreted by the team as an act of religious service, or the act of humbling oneself in order to help others and to show God's love. When acts of service are voluntary rather than a requirement of their employment, the acts exemplify Christian morality. Through service, which requires lowering oneself, symbolically and often physically, Dominicans can establish their moral subjectivity and status as generous hosts of the encounter despite the economic inequality between them. Significantly, the Bible verses that Amy cited speak to ideals of service, moral subjectivity, and divine heroism by way of oratorical union.

As a role reversal, hospitality can upend American expectations of the encounter. In particular, novice STM participants typically have preconceived notions about their relation to Dominicans. Novice participants' expectations of their role in the encounter is to provide aid, show God's love, and save Dominicans, by teaching them about and converting them to Christianity. Americans are frequently surprised when instead they are on the receiving end of gifts, service, and spiritual lessons. In Chapter 3, I described how a participant referenced the parable of the widow's mite to describe Dominican giving behaviors. The story compares the wealthy's expensive gifts to the temple treasury with the donation given by a poor widow, which, although smaller in amount, represented her entire savings. Amy reflects this same sentiment when she wonders the church's costs

for hosting her team. The STM encounter is predicated on Americans' charitable giving and service, which are made possible by their higher economic status. Receiving gifts, hospitality, and service from the people the team had constructed as poor recipients, challenges some of their preconceived notions about their own and others' moral subjectivity. Team members describe being humbled by Dominicans' acts of hospitality. In these moments, STM discourses highlight an inversion of preconceived ideologies of moral subjectivity and divine heroism. As the Good Samaritan team continued to discuss the employee's act of service, they concluded that "we had come to give but have gotten so much back in return." This trope of volunteering indicates that the team was surprised to have learned something from Dominicans. Yet, the trope also alludes to the team reflecting on and even confronting preconceived notions of moral superiority. The trope also belies any notion of charitable giving and service as purely altruistic.

Traditional theories of gift exchange have largely ignored charity because it is without reciprocation, and therefore not egalitarian; these theories often argue that there is no altruism because the donor receives, at the very least, satisfaction from giving. According to anthropologist Mary Douglas (2000, vii)

> [T]he whole idea of a free gift is based on a misunderstanding. There should not be any free gifts. What is wrong with the so-called free gift is the donor's intention to be exempt from return gifts coming from the recipient. Refusing requital puts the act of giving outside any mutual ties […] According to Marcel Mauss that is what is wrong with the free gift. A gift that does nothing to enhance solidarity is a contradiction.

Charitable giving practices shift the focus from reciprocation to expressions of gratitude. The value of gratitude is explicitly socialized to Dominicans. In my first year following the Making a Difference team, Pastor Ricardo's sermon at the end of the mission focused

on the lesson of gratitude. Pastor Ricardo preached on Numbers 11:4–14.[25] Pastor Ricardo's voice resonated loudly as he urged the congregation in attendance, mostly children and youths, that they should be grateful for what they had been given. He warned them that God hates disdain and ungraciousness. To clarify the underlying purpose of his sermon, Pastor Ricardo then connected his sermon to Making a Difference, asking Joe to stand and be honored. Pastor Ricardo told the congregation that it was impossible to thank God enough for sending Joe to help the Dominican Republic by helping children get an education. When I interpreted the sermon for Joe, he was glad that Pastor Ricardo had used that week's sermon as a culminating event for Making a Difference and teaching the lesson of gratitude. The young people of the church reproduced this gratitude after the service, when they came up to Joe to thank him, give him a hug, and ask to have their photographs taken with him. Joe feels that it is important for him to come to the Dominican Republic to oversee the mission each year, even though local leaders are equipped to distribute the funds and run his mission independently. According to Joe, "I want to see the fruits of my labor." This expression

[25] Numbers 11: **4** The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, "If only we had meat to eat! **5** We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. **6** But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!" **7** The manna was like coriander seed and looked like resin. **8** The people went around gathering it, and then ground it in a hand mill or crushed it in a mortar. They cooked it in a pot or made it into loaves. And it tasted like something made with olive oil. **9** When the dew settled on the camp at night, the manna also came down. **10** Moses heard the people of every family wailing at the entrance to their tents. The LORD became exceedingly angry, and Moses was troubled.**11** He asked the LORD, "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? **12** Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their ancestors?**13** Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, 'Give us meat to eat!' **14** I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me.

reflects the altruism question. Joe also desires for the children to see a regular face every year to stand in as a symbol of the mission. It is important to him that the children learn to direct their gratitude to God at someone specific, rather than to something abstract or anonymous. Although, gratitude can in some ways function as a form of reciprocation, in that givers receive something in return, gratitude deepens feelings of inequality between the groups. For that reason, American participants resist accepting gratitude.

According to Parry (1986:458), the unreciprocated gift debases the recipient because it "denies obligation and replaces the reciprocal interdependence on which society is founded with an asymmetrical dependence." Phrases, such as "debases the recipient" and "asymmetrical dependence," is reminiscent of the culture of dependency posited by Christian writers on volunteering, such as Lupton and Corbett and Fikkert. According to Lupton (2011:34), recipients of charitable giving eventually "devolve from gratitude to expectation," and that donors will then give out of pity for the poor. Lupton contends that charitable giving relations disempowers recipients. In the cases of Dominicans who tried to negotiate what they had received, ingratitude is severely condemned as lack of humility. Humility has the distinction of often being considered a relatively negative subjectivity in everyday life, particularly regarding class situations of power, but it is also esteemed as an important Christian value. Thus, humility is hegemonic, subscribing modes of disempowerment and inequality as conditions for receiving. Humility thusly reinforces class standings and hierarchies, and resistance to it threatens the false solidarity that is cultivated through giving relations. For instance, one day after buying school supplies, Joe attempted to video record the line of students in

their new uniforms waving to the camera and saying *gracias* in unison. One teenage girl visibly rolled her eyes in an exaggerated fashion. Joe was upset because he had wanted to post the video to the team's social media accounts, and he did not want to share the girl's ingratitude with his donors. Two years later, he recognized the same girl (out of hundreds) and pointed her out to his wife, Michelle, and relayed the story. Michelle attempted to downplay Joe's emotional response through cultural relativism, replying that "teens are teens in the US and the Dominican." Rebellion is a Western cultural hallmark of teenagers. In this instance, an "eyeroll" can also symbolize an act of dissent and class resistance to mitigate the unequal power of the charitable gift. Joe was upset because the act of micro-resistance denied the inherent byproduct of charity, or giver's satisfaction of altruism. Pressured to perform gratitude on camera for the hundreds of people in another country who might view the video, she is cast as a bad actor because she does not conform to the ideal, humble and grateful recipient and resists the ever-smiling Dominican archetype that I explored in Chapters 3 and 4. Negotiation and resistance to STM expectations can also be a rejection of the underlying nature of their giving relations.

Reciprocation by recipients of charitable gifts can also take the form of giving to others in need, or "paying it forward." Although Dominicans cannot reciprocate in kind to STM teams, they do share what they have received with others in the community. For example, inspired by how Making a Difference had impacted their own community, the Dominican youth group at an ABC church embarked on their own daytrip to the Bella Vista neighborhood outside of town to distribute basic school supplies, such as pencils

and notebooks. The outreach reproduced the Making a Difference giving structures and many of the same religious discourses that emphasize gratitude to God for the gifts. Pastor Ricardo told the youth group in a sermon that they had been assigned the task of contributing to God's work and called on them to serve others as Jesus did, citing John 13:13-17,[26] in which Jesus washes his disciples' feet and calls on them to follow his example by serving others and washing each other's feet. Pastor Ricardo emphasized the importance of service to the youths. He described lowering oneself and showing humility as the greatness of evangelism. This mission was organized by the youth leader Javier, who also works part-time at the Hope mission clinic in Bella Vista and leads other initiatives there with the blessing of the Hope team. The Hope team wants Bella Vista to be a mission site that they share through partnership with the ABC church. Upon hearing of the Dominican youths' own mission, most members of Making a Difference were initially critical of them. They felt that Dominicans' ability to give to others suggested that the students that they had helped did not represent real need. Only one member saw the group's mission as a reflection of their own.

Divine Fetishism of Gifts

Gift exchange during STMs can involve complex negotiations between Americans and Dominicans. Yet, the balance of power is still unequal. As I outlined in Chapter 6, this inequality can lead to misguided exchanges that sometimes cause harm to local people.

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[26] [13] "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. [14] Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. [15] I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. [16] Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. [17] Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Both sides of the encounter attempt to resolve this imbalance through religious language. Even though Christians believe that they are all equal before God, that equality does not extend to their class status and other lived experiences. To navigate this inequality, Americans avoid direct requests for aid because they must temporarily recognize and account for the power they wield. American STM participants also frequently downplay their relationship with the gifts that they give Dominicans. This process plays out discursively. In the process of what I term "divine fetishism," participants fetishize gifts: the role of a divine agent, or God, is articulated as the source behind STM gift exchange, rather than the actions and funds of the American participants. Participants use religious language to emphasize the role of God as the ultimate giver, and Americans construct themselves as mere conduits of the gift. Divine fetishism is related to and works in similar ways as Panglossian egoism, divine heroism, and oratorical unions, in that each circumscribes a worldview of inequality and is shaped by contemporary evangelical ideas about God's power and one's own moral subjectivity and agency.

Divine fetishism works in parallel with the Spanish phrase *si Dios quiere*, or "God willing," which is commonly expressed by Dominican Christians in everyday life. The phrase recognizes the omniscient power of God central to the Christian faith and demonstrates faithfulness to God by giving up one's own control or desires to God's will. The frequent use of *si Dios quiere* in the Dominican Republic is also reflective of the cruel arbitrariness and precarity of poverty in the country, where one's livelihood can be wiped out in an instant without cause, or where promises made by the government or a mission are mostly unfulfilled and continuously deferred. For that reason, among others,

Dominican usage of the phrase is heightened during their participation in STMs and also taken up by American teams. In the context of the mission encounter, the purpose of the phrase is multifold. On one hand, the expression can downplay the pressures that Americans may feel to provide for all of the needs and requests that they encounter in the Dominican Republic. It also works to fetishize the gifts, recognizing them not as the result of American economic privilege, but instead as sent by God. Americans often repeat the phrase with this intention when discussing their future STM plans. To deny someone a gift or reject a request outright is unchristian and unsociable. To leave that determination of gifts up to God's will, relieves Americans of that pressure. Additionally, as it does in everyday Dominican life, *si Dios quiere* also performs a moral subjectivity that is similar to the ideal receiver that is expressed in American gift-giving ideologies—humble, unexpectant, and faithful to God. Those Americans who are disenchanted by Dominicans' direct requests, find the religious phrase refreshing, and may be more inclined to give to Dominicans who employ *si Dios quiere*. The phrase often inspires evangelicals to give or give more. Additionally, in realizing God's will by providing gifts, Americans are assigned divine heroism.

Divine fetishism is sanctified through religious language by both Americans and Dominicans during the encounter. Through prayers, sermons, and ritualized language, Americans downplay their own roles as givers and attribute the gifts to God. Throughout one STM, an American youth pastor reminded his team that "God is a giving God," to encourage them to practice generosity and service. Participants are asked to reflect on their own roles as divine heroes, emulating the works of Jesus. Biblical references

reinforce these ideologies, such as Joe citing Psalm 115:1 in his annual mission report: "Not to us, O Lord, but to you goes all the Glory!" In quoting this passage, Joe prescribes the work of his mission as the work of God and expresses gratitude to God. The gifts are both from God and in service to God because they answer a divine call to end suffering and are an important part of evangelism.

Expressing gratitude is an expected practice of the ideal receiver. However, often Americans reject Dominicans' expressions of gratitude, asking them to thank God instead. As Joe writes in his annual report to the mission's donors, "We make every effort to deflect all gratitude expressed by the children and their families away from us and towards God." As a discursive exchange, divine fetishism denies the act of reciprocation. In deflecting gratitude to God, Americans defer or reconfigure their own agency in the giving process. For example, after spending three days purchasing school uniforms for children, Joe spoke through an interpreter to a Dominican congregation. Joe opened his speech by saying:

> Each year when I come to the Dominican Republic, I am always hesitant to get up and speak when I am asked to. I always hesitate to get up and speak because I never want to take credit for the work that we do here. I give all the glory to God. Our work that we do, our ministry, it does not belong to us, it is His. But I'm so grateful that He has entrusted Making a Difference in us and considers us trustworthy to carry out His purpose here. And it is our prayer that Making a Difference is simply making a difference in the lives of the children here in the church.

Joe's sentiments are consistently invoked during my interviews with him, in his interactions with Dominicans, and in his use of religious language such as prayers and sermons. They are also reproduced by the local pastors, who emphasize to their

congregations that the gifts are not from Joe, his donors, or his organization, but from God. Similarly, in his report, Joe reflects on a mother expressing her gratitude to him:

> I have to be careful not to let moments like this build up my spiritual pride. But at the same time, it sure feels good to know what a difference you're making in someone's life. Hearing this mother's gratitude for our work makes all the work we do behind the scenes worth it. I know that the people here, parents especially have a tremendous amount of gratitude for what we do. But I always, I always try to make it a point to let them know that I cannot take credit for what we do […] I always tell them that all the glory all the credit goes to God and I want them to know that. But still, they want to thank someone. That's natural of course. And I'll let them say thanks.

Joe's description, in which he repeatedly avoids expressing his relationship with the gifts before finally accepting the parents' gratitude, reveals the performative aspects of divine fetishism. Divine fetishism in this sense is an attempt to counteract the imbalance of power but it can also work in self-service. American teams largely practice deferment of agency, "I give all the glory to God," yet their use of religious language bestows a very important role to them. Many Americans state in a similar manner that God "has entrusted in us and considers us trustworthy to carry out his purpose here." The fetishization of God in gift giving constructs American participants' spiritual capital as worthy people entrusted to do God's work. In this way, it is similar to the evangelical solution to the problem of pain that I described in Chapter 6.

As a form of spiritual capital, divine fetishism reflects another Christian meaning of the word gift. Among evangelicals, spiritual gifts, also called charismatic gifts, are special talents that are given to faithful Christians by the Holy Spirit intended for their service to God and the church. Gifts can include natural and supernatural abilities. For

instance, the spiritual gifts most frequently cited to me were healing;[27] speaking in tongues and interpreting; and prayer. For instance, Peter 4:10, the verse that Amy wrote about in her journal entry mentioned earlier in this chapter relays this meaning of gift: "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."[28] Preaching at the end of one trip, Joe invoked this meaning of a spiritual gift by constructing himself and his mission as a conduit for God. He told the church how everyone has a unique, special God-given gift, or a special capability. Joe described his own spiritual gift as "having a big heart and loving to help children." Hoping to inspire by his own example, Joe concluded his speech by calling on the congregation, especially the children, to reflect on or discover their own personal gift and to think about how they can use it to better their communities.

Although STMs are similar to secular forms of volunteer-tourism in terms of their humanitarian goals, they differ due to their evangelizing efforts. Gift giving during STMs typically occurs during sanctioned times. The giving process is ritualized, during which mundane commodity goods take on a spiritual significance. Medical missions set up prayer stations that patients visit as they wait to receive their medications and other aid. Other STMs distribute religious materials such as Bibles or pamphlets alongside aid. Joe explains that "Making a Difference is a faith-based mission, [which is why] we give to these churches. We also want to evangelize, which is why I bring these [religious

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[27] Healing can refer both to preforming miracles, such as those found in the Bible, and also as a caregiver or medical worker.

[28] In the Old Testament, Isaiah 11:1-3 lists seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord). However, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are distinct from the spiritual or charismatic gifts of the New Testament.

pamphlets] too, so they can learn about God!" Joe and other STM leaders believe that STM charitable giving teaches children firsthand about God's love. For instance, during their Vacation Bible School (VBS), the Hope team played the children's game of telephone, using the words "*Jesús*," "*regalo*," and "*amor*." They asked the children what the words had in common, and the answer was "God's love." The team explained to the children that God showed them love by sending Jesus as a gift of forgiveness to the world. The VBS lesson also echoes the one taught by Joe, who stresses to the children that the uniforms they receive are a gift from God and that gifts are not free. He compares the gift of school supplies to God's gift of forgiveness. For STM teams, the gifts are a material representation of God's love, but crucially, the participants show Dominicans God's love. Participants adhere to a religious interpretation of the cycle of poverty theory, believing that children in poverty will fail or have difficulty achieving unless they know God's love. Joe writes to his donors:

> Poverty causes children to have very low self-esteem, low aspirations. Sponsorships expand children's views about their own possibilities. Many of these children don't think they are capable of much. [Sponsorships] help them realize that they are each given special gifts from God to benefit their communities and help them develop aspirations for their future. We are not just giving them a "hand out" but rather we are inspiring hope for a future and better quality of life by giving them not only access to education, but instilling aspirations, building their self-esteem and reinforcing the importance of a relationship with God.

Joe distinguishes and elevates his mission's gifts from mere handouts, which are criticized in neoliberal narratives of charity as cultivating dependency. For Making a Difference, the school supplies represent more than a tool to overcoming the financial barrier to get an education; the gift also has a symbolic meaning of love and hope that the

team believes can only come from God. For STM teams, God's love is the ultimate gift. STM teams give aid so that they can give God's love.

The belief that STM aid shows God's love aligns with Mauss' theory that a gift is inalienable from the spirit of the givers. STM gifts are similarly imbued with the spirit of the divine. Annette Weiner (1992:33) expands on the process of inalienable possession in her ethnography, writing:

> What makes a possession inalienable is its exclusive and cumulative identity[...] Its history is authenticated by fictive or true genealogies, origin myths, sacred ancestors, and gods. In this way, inalienable possessions are transcendent treasures to be guarded against all the exigencies that might force their loss.

In the context of STM giving, charitable gifts are ritualized as inalienable. Yet, unlike some contexts of gift exchange, the charitable gifts will continue to be used and eventually disposed of as any other commodity, since charity is frequently utilitarian. When Americans use religious language to describe their mission as "God's will" and that they are doing "God's work", their actions and gifts are legitimized as sacred. It is because of the gifts' divine essence that asking outright for aid, negotiating for something that would more useful, or otherwise seeming ungrateful is not just interpreted as rude but is even offensive to God.

Requesting or negotiating gifts is also significant because it temporarily exposes the underlying economic relations between Americans and Dominicans. Negotiating the gift creates a moment of disjuncture that disrupts Americans' idealization of friendship and fellowship. Divine fetishism ultimately serves to erase or blur the unequal statuses in charitable giving. By deflecting agency of the gift, divine fetishism reconfigures giving

into a triadic relationship among Americans, Dominicans, and a divine agent, rather than a traditionally conceived dyadic structure. American and Dominican participants are thusly able to sustain a level of self-deception of their relations of power related to production and instead emphasize their religious relationship only, that is as brothers and sisters in Christ. Only by deferring gratitude and downplaying their status can Americans try to create a semblance of equality. This semblance of equality is essential to reproducing the systems of giving and market exchange as well as their goals of lateral fellowship.

In their attempt to create egalitarian charitable exchange, Americans' use of divine fetishism incidentally reproduces the pre-existing inequalities of the encounter, in which American wealth is misconstrued as spiritual capital. Through divine fetishism, Americans act as God's stewards, demonstrating their responsibility and virtuousness managing God's resources or gifts. STM giving discourses are thusly similar to oratorical unions, in which participants invoke such ritualized phrases as "we ask that you guide us" or "we ask that you use our bodies to do your will" to authorize and legitimize their actions as sacred. By claiming the role as a conduit or steward giving gifts from God, Americans accumulate spiritual capital. Among Christians, giving is praised and assigned a high moral value, such as in Acts 20:35, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Teams sometimes refer to aid as a "blessing" and describe how they want to "bless" someone by giving them a gift. For example, one year in his speech to the Sunday congregation Joe, states, "This is all the Glory of God, and I'm just acting for him. I hope that it's been a blessing to go to school." Similarly, Pastor Ricardo's sermon mentioned

earlier in this chapter described Joe as a model servant of God. The spiritual capital of STM donors is also constructed into the giving process. As Joe writes to his donors,

> God is ultimately the one who is working in the hearts of our donors. So, we give Him all the credit for the success of Making a Difference and are so grateful for the way He has blessed, and continues to bless, this ministry.

Yet at the same time, Joe claims that Making a Difference is partly responsible for the increased size of the ABC church through outreach and evangelism, writing, "The Sunday school program at the ABC congregation has really blossomed in the past year. We have to give God the glory, but also recognize the positive effect that [Making a Difference] has had." The act of saving or converting others to Christianity is considered among the most important Christian moral responsibilities and forms of spiritual capital.

Perhaps most significantly, the construction of God as the agent behind the aid enables misrecognition, or a "collectively maintained and approved self-deception" (Bourdieu 1977, 6) that obscures the material capital behind the American's gifts. In a similar manner as Marx's theory of commodity fetishism, which emphasizes the material good to the exclusion of the social relations of production, divine fetishism works to obscure Americans' economic capital and erase their pre-existing economic relations with Dominicans, relations that are tied to Dominican poverty and Americans' ability to give. Aided by ritualized language that attributes power to God, participants misrecognize Americans' economic ability to give gifts as spiritual capital. Misrecognize here does not mean that participants forget the vast differences of wealth between them, but rather that they frequently downplay the disparity. Their market entanglements and relational aspects of inequality are also erased. According to Bourdieu, religion is just

one of the many seemingly benign and nonpolitical institutions that impose a process of misrecognition, or the willful self-deception that conserves the social order by legitimizing, naturalizing, and reproducing the social inequalities and domination that characterize the modern world. Misrecognition is an obstacle to critique or resistance of the social order. STMs shape social life and can serve to legitimize dominant and oppressive forces. STMs also serve the ultimate social function in helping people make sense of their respective positions in the social order.

Commodity Fetishism

The process of divine fetishism of gifts during STM encounters outlined above is only made possible by an earlier process of commodity fetishism. The commodity chain process, from sugar-cane cultivation and production in the Dominican Republic to refined sugar on American supermarket shelves, reflects Marx's description of the organization of social relationships under capitalism, in which relationships of production and exchange are transformed into relationships between things. Prior to the encounter, those involved in the process of growing or processing sugar had virtually no chance of meeting or communicating with those buying it across the world at the end of the supply chain. This complex system of alienation makes producers more vulnerable to unfair wages and exploitative labor practices. Although the explicit goals of STMs are for American laypeople to become direct agents in missionization and charity, STMs and other forms of volunteer-tourism incidentally also provide opportunities for American consumers to come face-to-face with producers, reconfiguring the social relationships of production that have been obscured by capitalism. In this way, STMs share some

elements in common with other growing trends, such as Fair Trade, that aim to de-fetishize the commodity by re-forming the social relationships of production. As Dolan (2009, 178) articulates on Fair Trade, "Fair Trade operates at the interstices of two different economies, straddling the border between rational, individualist market relations and the ideals of obligation associated with the gift." In "conventional market exchange […] paying ends the obligation and dissolves the relationship" (Dolan 2009, 179). As consumers, American participants' obligation or recognition of workers end in this conventional manner, through payment. However, the moral obligation as Christians compels them to pursue the interaction further through charitable giving.

Americans who partner with DRM learn firsthand about sugar production, including the living and working conditions of the sugar-cane workers. STM experiences involve informal home or neighborhood tours, where participants see workers' houses and everyday lives, listen to accounts told through an interpreter of their limited access to education or other employment, and see the effects of hard labor on their health. Jess, a first-time STM participant told me, "I knew that conditions would be bad from what everyone else had told me. I had heard, you know, that their houses would be bad. So, I was expecting houses at least, but in reality, it's just tin piled together. They have nothing." Home visits expound on everyday life. For instance, the Making a Difference team was invited to dinner at the home of a family from an ABC church who live in a company-owned neighborhood in town. At dinner, the family explained to the team that their electricity goes out at least three times daily, sometimes for five hours, so they cannot keep most perishable food items in their refrigerator. Additionally, during the

annual weekslong cleaning of the nearby sugar factory, ash spreads over the surrounding neighborhoods including theirs. They described to the team how the white powdery ash piles up even inside their house. They explained that it looks like snow, or at least how they had imagined snow, they joked, as they had never seen snow themselves. Although the pollution has since improved slightly after the Dominican government imposed some regulations, the factory is still a daily threat to air quality. STM participants are able to testify to the poor living conditions of the sugar-cane workers. The medical volunteers also understand the toll that cane labor took on workers' health, citing their chronic pain. Another harmful effect of European and North American demands for sugar is the high prevalence of sugar in the communities that grow the crop. Sugar is prominent in the Dominican diet, which contributes to poor dental health and the nation's very high prevalence of hypertension and diabetes. Yet, team members, even those who had been to the Dominican Republic multiple times, were ignorant of the larger historical political economy behind this extreme poverty. I asked teams what they knew about the people they were helping. Participants responded vaguely. Beyond basic information, *e.g.*, that workers are poor, from Haiti, and face discrimination, very few could speak to anything specific about the history— the forced migration of Haitians in the early 20th century or the current threat of deportation that Haitian-descent people face. The teams only knew about their immediate material and health care needs without an understanding for the root causes of this poverty. As Ramón attested:

> Our economy is based on tourism, and more than 50% are from the United States. Many Americans come on these mission trips, like [they] are doing here, and they are saying I will try to make things more easy for this person, and more people come here and they go out to help the poor

> people, kids, malnutrition, and they give them vitamins, food. You know about that. But I know they will never take a microphone or talk to the government about the treatment of Haitians here, but if they did the government here would make things more easy on the Haitians, give them legal papers, and better work.

Ramón believes that Americans have the power to enact a more structural-level change because the Dominican Republic's largest industry is tourism, and Americans represent half of those tourists. Dominican STM coordinators like Ramón say that they have built close relationships with a small handful of STM participants throughout the years who demonstrate more awareness to their situation. The coordinators have called on them to take action at a more structural-level; however, their pleas are often interpreted and implemented by Americans from within the existing system of STMs, rather than outside of it and through different measures, such as activism, as Ramón suggests.

One reason American STM participants have not taken the microphone, so to speak, is because commodity fetishism has persisted, despite the giving relationships that STM teams have built with sugar-cane workers, relationships that sometimes span over a decade. Charitable giving during volunteer-tourism can in some ways be compared to the exchange of commodities during Fair Trade, which Dolan (2009, 178) argues is "less an economic than a social contract grounded in webs of attachment and emotional exchange antipathetic to the logic of our postindustrial market." Dissimilar to Fair Trade, the market exchange that occurs prior to the encounter is erased during STMs. STM practices of charitable giving decontextualize the gifts from the market, treating the conditions of gift giving as a separate sphere, when current forms of giving shape and are shaped by the conditions of late capitalism. In their discourses, Americans make no connection

between the sugar cane that Haitians cultivated with the processed sugar in their daily diet. None I spoke with were aware what sugar brands are sourced from the fields that they were standing in. In one conversation, I asked the Americans of the Good Samaritan team what they knew about the sugar company and the cane workers. Jake, a nurse, responded, “Well I know we prescribe a lot of pain medication and they have high blood pressure because of the hard work and the long hours.” The workers’ pain was alienated. Despite standing in the middle of a sugar-cane field with the cane workers in front of them, the team had not been able to de-fetishize the sugar that they consume. They failed to draw connections between their lives and purchases in the United States and the material and health care needs that their medical mission was supplementing in the bateyes. Commodity fetishism persists because providing aid and buying sugar take place thousands of miles apart.

The removal of commodities from social action obscures participants’ connection prior to the encounter and thus limits their knowledge and ability to act. For instance, during these conversations, participants would sometimes ask me about the sugar company, Azúcar Central, and I mentioned the company’s connection with familiar US brand-names. When I asked them if this new knowledge would change how they purchased sugar or how they thought about their sugar consumption in the future, their response was always a casual “No.” Although the personal relationship with workers and the divine call of moral responsibility drives American evangelicals to travel and to give charitable gifts, it fails to deter the material drive for goods or even a re-evaluation of how those goods are obtained, despite increasing trends in the US that prioritize ethical

consumption. It is not that this system of relations of production could easily be solved through participants' own consumption, such as boycotting sugar or pressuring companies for more ethical alternatives. Rather, this lack of action or accountability in their consumption practices stands in stark contrast to their criticisms that Dominican consumer behaviors are irrational and even immoral, as well as their STM-inspired pledges to reduce their consumption practices and curb their materialism, an effort to pursue a more moral livelihood by selectively emulating the "simple" lives of Dominicans (Chapter 3). Participants' desire to simplify their lives is typically a short-lived performance of the moral lessons from the STM and—unlike their sugar consumption—has no direct impact on Dominicans' lives, making it ultimately more self-serving than a long-term or substantive practice. Although decreased consumption has many positive effects for the environment, it does nothing to address the health and economic problems that Dominicans face because of their working conditions. Pledging to consume less instead of investigating the supply chain, reflects American's misrecognition of their own privileged position, and limits their response for providing more structural and long-term solutions.

The goal of mutual recognition is fundamental to STM encounters. On STMs, American participants come face-to-face with a group of people to learn about their lives and to recognize them as fellow humans and Christians. However, the encounter takes place under the established structures of tourism as well as the Christian practices of witness, testament, and charity. Tourism and global Christianity frame Americans' understanding of poverty and agency, often lending itself to a misrecognition of the other

and the self. Class- and race-based stereotypes and religiopolitical discourses of morality that circulate among American teams present an entangled relationship between religious and economic values that ultimately contribute to a harmful misrecognition of American's personal moral agency and Dominican poverty.

In contrast to the sale of Dominican-produced sugar in the US, which is removed from social action, STM gifts are exchanged in face-to-face networks and create social solidarity. These two different, yet related, iterations of exchange play an important role obscuring the unequal positions of power that foreground the STM relationship. The dual processes of fetishism—of sugar and gifts—enable Bourdieusian misrecognition in which American STM participants sustain a level of self-deception of their global relations of commodity and gift exchange with Dominicans. This misrecognition works to normalize the current system of inequality by moralizing charity over other actions that would recognize and adequately compensate Dominican labor. In the process of displaying conditions of unethical labor, STMs at the same time normalize them.

STM participants accept and reinforce neoliberal modes of production and exchange in two ways. First, although STM giving operates in response to late capitalism, it serves to reproduce it. As I have demonstrated throughout this dissertation, the STM system of giving socializes late-capitalist values and notions of agency to young Americans as evangelical morality. Through observing the bateyes and forming social relations with Dominicans, STMs foster participants' sense of individual responsibility for social needs and encourage them to intervene against the evils of poverty and illness. Because participants are told that their moral actions painting houses and dispersing aid

change lives, they are empowered to reproduce late-capitalist systems of charity without substantive change or seeking out alternatives. Similar to participants in extreme gifting (Halperin 2009, 103), when STM participants return to the US, they function as productive members of late capitalism; they continue practicing unethical consumption. They may also be compelled to consume more rather than less because they believe that their materialism is mitigated by recycling their possessions as charitable donations (Chapter 6). They introduce other forms of giving back home and inspire and indoctrinate others to follow their example.

Second, STMs help to subdue class struggles. STM aid such as housing, food, and medical care, helps Haitian-Dominicans to continue to produce sugar at low wages and helps sugar corporations maintain the status quo. Although gifts have a dual nature in that they promote social solidarity, that solidarity is also tenuous until the gift is reciprocated. In this sense, gifts pauperize. As Rajak (2009) suggests in her research on a transnational mining corporation in South Africa, charitable aid given in this manner is a Trojan Horse. According to Rajak (2009, 211), gifts have a "veiled power…to empower the donor while oppressing the recipient." In the words of one community worker whom Rajak (2009, 11) quotes, "As long as we're dependent on handouts from the mining companies, we'll be their slaves." Charitable gifts are demeaning to recipients because they not only reflect and but also crucially tend to perpetuate non-egalitarian relations. Under late capitalism, workers are not equitably compensated for their labor through adequate wages or governmental services and must rely instead on charitable gifts. As Robbins (2009, 55) argues, recognition underlies all spheres of action, and wages represent a recognition of

work. Haitian-Dominican sugar workers are not provided with fair wages or ethical working conditions; their work goes under- or unrecognized. During the STM encounter, Americans recognize Dominicans as poor, without also recognizing them for their labor, knowledge, or skills, in keeping with American neoliberal depictions of poverty. American STM participants' continued nonrecognition and under-compensation of Dominican labor constitutes an inequality. The STM system of charitable giving does not address the root causes of inequality and instead helps to perpetuate them.

I will consider in the next and final chapter how religion is used as a tool for reproducing and legitimizing these structures of inequality. At the same time, religion can potentially challenge these same structures and promote alternative pathways to economic justice and equality. American STM participants are committed to improving their practices so that they are more effective and do not cause harm. During my research, I even observed some burgeoning STM alternatives, which I will describe briefly. However, unlike most studies on STMs, I will not offer advice on how to reform STMs or volunteer-tourism. White saviorism cannot be used to dismantle the (white) structures of oppression. Americans who want to combat inequality in the Dominican Republic will better serve the cause through concerted actions at home that are accountable for American complicity and fully recognize Dominican autonomy.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION: ACTIVISM AND THE LANGUAGE OF FELLOWSHIP, FREEDOM, AND JUSTICE

Many STMs proclaim that they are different from others, but I encountered only one team that promoted macro-level solutions to Dominican poverty. STM organizer Brandon was on a site visit to establish an STM program with Dominican Republic Mission (DRM) and to develop a long-term sustainable agricultural project. Brandon was only there for a few days and had a busy schedule, but he took an interest in my research and accepted my request for an interview on his last night so that we would be able to compare our notes on STMs. As Brandon and I began asking each other questions, we initially discussed STMs with some trepidation. Although I was open with my research participants about the fact that my work would be critical of STMs, none of them had ever asked me to divulge the details of those criticisms. Brandon evidently felt a need for caution as well. After dropping some subtle hints, he revealed that he took a "radical, activist approach" to STMs. Seeing my ears perk up, he chuckled and admitted that, as an STM organizer and a former missionary, he was never sure to whom he could open up about his opinions about STMs.

Years earlier, Brandon and his wife had participated in an STM in Central America that transformed their worldviews; they felt called to leave their jobs and move their family abroad to become missionaries. Throughout his ten years as a missionary in Central America, Brandon increasingly had questions about his faith and about the

efficacy and value of mission work, especially STMs. He felt that he had to conceal these questions from people back home. His voice cracking with emotion, Brandon described to me how he and his wife had accepted Catholics as fellow Christians, even taking communion alongside them, for which many of their friends back home had rejected them.

> I am still asking for support from people who haven't changed with me and my wife. I was with these people at my church before I left to go, but I am no longer with those people. It's not that my faith is bigger, but it's because I have seen these things and because I have more questions now, and that actually makes my faith stronger.

Brandon had worked in sustainable agriculture prior to devoting himself to mission work full time. He envisions what he described as a campesino system in which sugar-cane workers work their own land and take ownership of the means of production. He saw this as a more sustainable and empowering solution than the STM model of supplying sugar-cane workers with medicine, clothing, and food every few months to meet their basic needs. He hoped to set up a system of sustainable agriculture that would enable Haitian-Dominicans to meet their own subsistence needs and also allow them to make profits from commercial sales. He mused, "How do missionaries define poverty? They see it as meeting basic needs or at most escape for the exceptional individual, but we need to change the macro system."

I was sitting on the edge of my seat when Debbie, a veteran member of the Freedom team, passed by. Overhearing our conversation, she sat down with us and began to talk at length about her team's work that day and the young girl whom she sponsored. She then turned to me and said, "I have a question for your research, do you know why

they throw their trash everywhere? You should find that out." She then suggested that I study "opulence in the bateyes" because she had seen a girl in the batey with a better cell phone than her own. Brandon interjected, asking her about her STM organization, which sends multiple large STM teams every year to work with DRM. Debbie answered proudly that her church had been involved with the same batey through DRM for 28 years. She and her husband went on multiple trips per year, sometimes as many as six, but now her husband wanted to cut back to just one or two trips per year because they were putting their two children through college. For this current trip, their team had raised over $85,000. Brandon complimented their fundraising skills and asked her what they had accomplished in the past 28 years. How had conditions in the batey changed? Debbie described their years-long, recently completed home-construction project, in which they had built 50 new homes in the batey that they sponsor. Now almost all of the houses in the batey had been rebuilt, shacks made of plywood and tin replaced by cinder-block structures. Beyond this, she made little comment. "Has your organization ever considered advocacy work?" Brandon asked. Debbie seemed thrown off by the question, so Brandon elaborated, suggesting that they should look into working to eliminate the root causes of poverty through influence over policy decisions, including working at a more structural level such as US foreign policy or with the Dominican government and the sugar corporations. "Hmm, advocacy," Debbie replied. "No, we haven't ever talked about that. I'll bring it up at our next meeting." After Debbie left, Brandon sighed.

> This is what I am talking about. Her church has been coming here to the same batey for 28 years, and what do they have to show for it? They live in better houses. But they're still poor. They still depend on DRM for basic needs. They have no escape. If they're investing that kind of money

> for 28 years, and they are still at that same batey... 28 years and they never discussed advocacy or questioned what difference they had really made.

At this point it was late in the night, and Brandon had to rest up for his last day. The next morning, Brandon had left before I was up. That evening, after dinner, Debbie approached me for consolation and advice, saying that the day had been hard on her.

> I gave some people some clothes, and they asked for more. I was really disappointed in that. How do we stop that? We've been coming here for so many years and built all of those houses and given them so many things, but still, they ask for more and want more. We give them shirts and they ask for shoes. How do we stop that? How do we move from just giving them handouts and enabling them? Where does it end?

Debbie had been thinking about her conversation with Brandon the night before, and had been motivated and inspired by what he had told her about long-term change. Gesturing toward another team that was sitting nearby, she said, "They do [health] education, maybe that's the model that we should be moving to so that we can break this cycle and they won't have to ask us for things." She expressed wanting to think about taking an education- and activism-based approach of which she had learned by talking with members of the two other groups staying at DRM at the time.

Religion

Missionary Jason once remarked to me, "People like to bash Christians for what we're doing, but we're the only ones out here doing the work." Although there are numerous secular humanitarian organizations in the Dominican Republic, and although the desire to alleviate suffering is not exclusive to Christians or to other religious groups, Jason is right. Many of the organizations and much of the volunteer tourism in the Dominican Republic (and around the world, for that matter) are Christian or faith-based. Social-

scientific research on religion like this dissertation can elucidate the prevalence of Christian missions and humanitarian organizations as well as why Christians typically—but not always—favor charitable giving over political activism, advocacy, and to a less extent, other methods such as lending, investing, and job creation.

Since Weber, social scientists of religion have studied how religious values shape and are shaped by economic values in ways that produce moral subjects. Theorists such as Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and Bourdieu have demonstrated the inseparability of religion and economics in the organization of social relations and social structure under capitalism. Their work has informed my own analysis, which treats subjectivity and social relations as products of religious and material conditions that unfold across cross-cultural encounters. These theorists all assert the importance of religion, viewing it as simultaneously a legitimizing force of dominance and a form of resistance; but they take various positions on the role of religion in the (re)production of socioeconomic systems.

Marx's thoughts on the relationship between religion and economic systems are typically summed up with the maxim "Religion is the opiate of the masses" (Raines 2002, 5). The maxim is generally taken to mean that religion impedes rational thought. For Marx, religion appeals to the lower classes as a sort of drug that dulls the senses and gives false hope for a life different from this one. For the elite, religion justifies their privilege, framing it as the result of moral virtue while legitimizing their exploitation and oppression of the lower classes. For Marx, religion gives life an order and coherence, disguising or rationalizing relations of domination while disempowering and pacifying the dominated. This maxim mentioned above is often used to decry religious institutions,

beliefs, and practices that have served to perpetuate inequality and oppression around the world. Marx's full statement receives far less attention: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people" (1975, 274). Marx is actually articulating a conflicted view of religion as both a source of suffering and a way of alleviating suffering. Religion has different and contradictory meanings for oppressors and oppressed, but it should not be overlooked that, for the latter, it can serve as an impetus for resistance.

The dual potential of religion as a cultural institution is made clear in the works by the other theorists mentioned above. Durkheim privileges religion itself, proposing that that the sacred is a source not of suffering and domination, but of social order, cohesion, and solidarity (Weiner 1992, 42). Durkheim asserts that religion, along with other social institutions and cultural beliefs, fosters a collective consciousness that maintains social solidarity. For Durkheim, religion, not class conflict, drives cultural transformation. Bourdieu offers a more tempered view of such matters, stating that religion can work within economic structures and class dynamics to serve as a means of social mobility and change (Browne and Milgram 2009, 5). According to Terry Rey (2004, 3) for both Weber and Bourdieu, religion "is a vital source of the legitimation of wealth and power, hence of domination. For both, religion also provides a way for the under-classes to make sense of their lot. Religion thus contributes to the misrecognition of the social order as legitimate" but can also prompt social change.

Throughout this dissertation, I have examined how STMs respond to conditions created by late capitalism while at the same time cultivating late-capitalist subjectivities

that conceal Americans and Dominicans' socioeconomic relations. The discourses that shape American evangelicals' giving practices legitimize STMs as moral and effective, obscuring the ways in which they cause harm and uphold a system of oppression.

However, a growing minority of STM participants, especially people of color and, more recently, members of "Gen Z" (Generation Z), are challenging and transforming some of these discourses. Their STM experiences have led them toward activist approaches, which were previously eschewed by conservative evangelicals as too left-wing and secular. According to Elisha (2011, 24), evangelicals sometimes resist the activist label because it implies a willful agency that could be seen as in conflict with the expectation of total submission to God's will; they "want to believe that when they take action in the world it is purely in the name of God's kingdom, not merely for the sake of action." As anti-racist and other broad-based social movements in the US have gained adherents and raised social consciousness in recent years, the discursive practices of young STM participants have increasingly reflected these movements' discourses of social justice. Notwithstanding the self-serving aspects of STMs, many participants, especially young participants, now seek out STMs in order to challenge their own worldviews and to find connection and mutual understanding with others who are different from themselves. Increasingly, STM participants, particularly those of Gen Z and those of color, find commonality between the conditions that are the impetus for social-justice movements at home and the poverty and inequality that they witness abroad. These nascent developments represent a break from such conversations in the past in which there was a disconnect between issues of racial and economic justice in the

US and the Dominican Republic (see Chapters 3 and 4). In this conclusion, I examine how pre-existing religious ideologies, such as fellowship, freedom, and justice, provide alternative perspectives to STMs relations and have the potential to shape class consciousness and new forms of solidarity between Americans and Dominicans. This recent activist turn provides exciting avenues for future research on religious-based activism.

Language and Understanding

The biblical story of the Tower of Babel[29] describes a world in which people originally spoke one common language. As the story goes, united by language, humans were able to construct a tower that reached into the heavens. Offended by their hubris, God scattered people around the world and gave them different languages so that their speech was no longer mutually intelligible. In essence, the story describes the origins of language diversity and casts that diversity as divine punishment. At the same time, it indicates that the ability to communicate is a powerful, constructive human tool. As diverse experiences continue to produce diverse worldviews, and as new episodes of human

[29] Genesis 11:1–9: Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. [2] As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. [4] Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth." [5] But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. [6] The Lord said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. [7] Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." [8] So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. [9] That is why it was called Babel—because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

contact continue to occur on a global scale, cross-cultural misunderstandings can seem like a form of punishment. Ways of communicating, which involve much more than interpreting across languages or brokering between cultures, must continuously be (re)learned.

As I explained in Chapter 7, recognition is a fundamental goal of STMs, and so is understanding. The biggest regret among American participants was their lack of fluency in Spanish, which limited their ability to communicate with most of the Dominicans they encountered and forced them to rely heavily on basic phrases and nonverbal communication, such as gestures and physical touch. Such interactions might not be lauded for their great depth. Nevertheless, both Dominican and American STM participants repeatedly claim that they are able to experience strong connections with each other, and they cite these interactions as their favorite parts of the day. Somewhat paradoxically, the presence of a trained interpreter creates greater social distance. American participants claim to feel a stronger social connection when they have to rely on smiling and pantomiming (and can interpret whatever is said, or not said, in words). When an interpreter is present, giving them the possibility of saying virtually whatever they want, American participants often do not know what to say because they share little common ground with the Dominicans outside of their religious beliefs. The presence of an interpreter also reveals the inherent imbalance of the encounter, as the interpreter generally will interpret all statements made by Dominicans and Haitians into English but are much more selective in interpreting American's statements into Spanish or Haitian Creole. Additionally, the Dominican participants in the interaction know (or believe, at

least) that they must select their words carefully if they hope to secure aid for themselves or their community.

Rather than rely on human interpreters, some Americans prefer to seek divine interpretations. Much like they believe that the Holy Spirit acts as a conduit between humans and God (Luhrmann 2012) in oratorical unions, as described in Chapter 5, many evangelicals believe that the spiritual or charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit include the abilities to speak in and interpret "tongues." In STM contexts, they extend this to a belief in divinely given abilities to transcend the language barrier. In one conversation, Felipa, a Dominican woman told Americans (in Spanish) that they could pray for her in either English or Spanish; as God knows all languages, He would make sure that she understood. An American participant, Patty, who had no previous knowledge of Spanish, claimed to have understood when a Felipa started quoting a Bible verse in Spanish, Proverbs 3:5, "Confía en el Señor de todo tu corazón." Patty described how the Holy Spirit had moved her; she had felt a warmth come over her and had started saying in English, along with the Dominican woman's Spanish, "Trust in God with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding." Whether intentionally or inadvertently chosen, the verse had special significance in this context, of course.

The Holy Spirit as interpreter reveals the possibilities and limitations of communication through perceived feelings and shared religious beliefs. However, like the oratorical union, these interpretations potentially can be exploited. American and Dominican participants claim that their conversations are divinely interpreted. Even if they do not understand the words, as one participant put it, they understand "the feeling

of God in one another." Similarly, one woman writes about a Dominican church service: "The Spirit descends, and we hear God's voices, even if the words are spoken in another language, we can understand in our own." And Joe writes to his mission donors in his annual report:

> When you have the ability to actually communicate with others through verbal exchange – you can sit, share stories, laugh and even cry – just as we do every year as dinner guests in the Dominicans' homes several nights throughout the week. In those moments, we experience true community and fellowship – and discover that we have so much in common. For even though we live 1,000's of miles apart, we have different skin color, we speak a different language, and we live very different lives - we all serve the same God - and because of that…we are brothers and sisters in Christ.

I have focused in this dissertation on religious language and religious discourses, but it might also be accurate to say that religion itself is the language through which recognition and understanding occur in STM encounters.

Fellowship

At the conclusion of a short-term mission, the members of a team typically sit down together to reflect on their favorite parts of the trip. Many participants reflect on their personal spiritual growth or the opportunity that they had to experience other cultures and to see how people in another part of the world worship God and follow Christ. However, building friendships with the Dominicans whom they met is most frequently cited as having made the greatest impact. Dominicans likewise characterize their relationships with American volunteers as friendship. For instance, before one mission team embarked on their return to the US, Michele, a Haitian-Dominican woman who coordinates mission work, told them,

> You live in the US, and we live here. But we are a team, and we couldn't do it without you, and I want to thank you for everything and your help, and I wanted to thank you for being a friend. That you left your own family and friends and lives in the US to help these people in the bateyes.

As Michele's words of gratitude suggest, friendships such as these defy traditional expectations, definitions, and theorizations. In folk definitions as well as in the anthropological study of friendship, friendship is typically conceptualized as being established through time spent together and then sustained by ideals of similarity, equality, and reciprocity. American volunteers and their Dominican counterparts are only together for a brief period of time and, as Michele notes, one group lives permanently in the US, the other in the Dominican Republic. They do they share a culture or, usually, a language, and their disparate class positions shape their interactions. One group's very presence revolves around helping the other group without expectation of any straightforward form of reciprocation—at least, not the kind that would establish egalitarian social bonds. Yet, Michele refers to their relationship as friendship and says that together they are a team. Friendship during, and resulting from, short-term missions must be considered within the broader context of the Christian idea of fellowship, which I have defined as a horizontal social relationship built around acts of companionship and shared religious beliefs and practices. Fellowship presents a model for lateral social relations across the STM encounter.

In terms of this model, American and Dominican Christians refer to themselves as a family and use kinship terms that assert spiritual familiality. For instance, participants characterize themselves as brothers and sisters in Christ, as when an American man remarked about a Dominican friend, "We're brothers. I was just born in America and he

wasn't." The terms "brothers and sisters" suggest that their roles are equal. Similarly, referring to each other as "children of God" places the position of power in the relationship as external to themselves. God is the paternal figure and it is His word that the Americans bring to those in need of evangelization, not their own. Joe's speech following a Making a Difference mission highlights kinship based on shared religious beliefs or practices:

> But of course, we are a family, right? We are brothers and sisters in Christ. I think about you all, all of the time, and I pray for the [ABC] church a lot. Especially Sunday mornings, when I go to my church in the US. I am praying to God—I always think about you, and the amazing thing is that many thousands of miles away, in the same moment, you are here in this church worshipping the same God I adore.

As Joe describes, Christians can experience fellowship across long distances because of their shared beliefs. Similarly, as one participant writes in her journal, regardless of linguistic differences, they share the same religion, which is its own powerful language: "As the service begins, I am aware that at the same moment on another island, a service is beginning now, possibly with the same words, in a different language." This passage draws on the notion of a global Christian community based in fellowship, a fellowship that transcends linguistic and cultural differences and nation-state boundaries. Participants also describe themselves as being part of "the Kingdom"; as such, they are charged with bringing others into the Kingdom through evangelization. This notion of "the Kingdom" is the basis for a kind of para-national identity among Christians. Discourses such as those used in narratives in the *doctrina* classes studied by Baquedano-López (2000, 430; 444–447) create frames for collective identity that privilege a moral order over ethnicity and nationality. Baquedano-López shows that moral-subject formation is embedded in

broader sociohistorical and political processes. For STM participants, the concept of the Kingdom centers their shared spirituality and transcends the national identities, American and Dominican, that would otherwise separate them.

Participants also use the phrase “body of Christ,” which has several meanings across Christianity. It may refer to the Eucharist, in which Jesus describes the communal bread and wine: “This is my body” (Luke 22:19–20). The evangelicals with whom I work believe in the sacramental union (a richly symbolic but less literal interpretation of the Eucharist than the Catholic notion of transubstantiation). In taking communion, they become united with Christ. By extension, they are also united with one another. This relates to a second interpretation of the phrase “body of Christ” in which Christ is considered the head of the church, and Christians are considered to be members of the church as a universal body. This idea is prominently expressed in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12:5, the latter of which reads, “So in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” One Dominican pastor preached to the visiting Americans, “We are a family. Every cell in our bodies is united as the body of Christ.” This metaphysical belief asserts an understanding of the self as being united with others as well as with the divine.

The concept of fellowship provides STM participants with an ideological framework for understanding the other as family member, friend, fellow member of the same kingdom, and fellow member of the same divine body. It thus projects aspirations toward egalitarianism into the encounter. The obligations entailed by these forms of relationship (kinship, friendship, shared divine membership) are vastly different from

those entailed by relationships between producers and consumers of commodities, or between donors and recipients of charity. Increasingly, STM groups are undertaking their work through partnerships with local organizations. The Hope team employs Dr. Javier and Nurse Elena and has partnered with the local ABC church in order to plant their own mission in a neighborhood outside of town. Another team takes an educational approach to healthcare, offering demonstrations, resources, and initiatives against high blood pressure and diabetes in an effort to prevent (rather than just treat) health problems. Their programs are run locally throughout the year by a Dominican team. As these examples suggest, emphasizing fellowship has the potential to reshape understandings of authority and the distribution of power.

Freedom

The concept of freedom is an important one in the anthropological study of morality and subjectivity (Fader 2011; Ortner 2005) and in the anthropology of Christianity (Keane 2007; Robbins 2004). Keane describes the moral narrative of modernity as one that valorizes the individual, autonomy, and freedom of will. These values, according to Keane (2007, 26), "partly derive from the Protestant reformation" and correspond with those of capitalism. The interactions that occur during STM encounters are peppered with references to freedom as well as to thematically adjacent and antonymic notions such as salvation, liberty, and slavery. In the Bible and in other religious discourses, such as sermons and the lyrics of Christian songs, a sharp contrast is drawn between different forms of salvation and freedom, particularly between spiritual freedom and physical freedom. ABC's mission, and likewise the missions of many of the other STM

organizations that I observed, is concerned primarily with spiritual salvation and freedom through religion. This is the notion of freedom that figures most prominently in Christian discourses around the world. For example, the Spanish worship song "Hay Libertad" proclaims:

> *Las cadenas de la muerte me quitó*
> *Para mí ya no hay condenación*
> *Hay libertad, libertad*
> *Siendo esclavo del pecado me libró*
> *En la cruz compró mi redención*
> *Y libertad, libertad*
>
> *Rompió mis cadenas*
> *Me dio vida nueva*
> *Y al fondo del mar echó mi maldad*
> *Lavó mis pecados*
> *Y me ha perdonado*
> *Solo en el nombre de Jesús*
> *Hay libertad*
>
> *Yo proclamo al que en la cruz por mí murió*
> *Y cambió mi duro corazón*
> *Por libertad, libertad*
> *El poder de su evangelio me salvó*
> *Y no me avergüenzo del Señor*
> *Mi libertad, libertad*

The song compares physical enslavement to sin and proclaims Christian salvation to be the means to freedom. Similarly, the English-language worship song "No Longer Slaves" declares, in the refrain: "I'm no longer a slave to fear. I am a child of God." The song concludes, "We've been liberated from our bondage. We're the sons and the daughters. Let us sing our freedom." According to these songs, fear and sin enslave us, and their chains can only be broken by God's forgiveness. Christianity has long provided millions of people around the world with the hope of freedom, safety, and security in the next life,

not this one. I have demonstrated how STM efforts typically privilege evangelization over humanitarianism. Recall Jason's complaint in Chapter 6 that newer missions are "too focused on the humanitarian side." STM discourses and practices generally emphasize and valorize spiritual freedom over freedom from the poverty of the bateyes. Unlike their secular volunteer-tourism counterparts, which prioritize saving lives, STMs focus on saving souls.

STM teams make various kinds of efforts to meet the material needs of local people, often with the aim of evangelism. Some STM discourses even imply that economic freedom is not the goal, as it would make Dominicans more susceptible to sin. As noted in Chapter 3, American STM participants perceive Dominicans as spiritual because they lead such "simple" lives. In this view, Dominicans are more spiritually free because they are not weighed down by materialism. The contrast here is with Americans, who must attenuate their relative wealth, and thus accrue spiritual capital, through charitable giving practices. In keeping with Christian ideologies that treat poverty as spiritual wealth, Americans valorize the perceived asceticism of Dominicans' poverty, which is easier for them to admire than to live. The main goal of STMs, meanwhile, is to save souls. American evangelicals tend to view the deprivations of poverty, or at least the resulting lifestyle, as virtuous and congruent with their preference for providing temporary relief while focusing on evangelism. Scriptural support for this preference is found in John 12:8, where Jesus says to his disciples, "You will always have the poor among you." The verse is commonly quoted during STMs, often as a call for generosity.

Their use of this phrase normalizes poverty as something that can be treated, but not solved.

Figure 13: An American woman and a Haitian-Dominican interpreter pray over a Haitian mother and her children as they wait to be seen by the STM team's medical clinic.

STM teams explicitly rank spiritual freedom above their other goals, which are mostly to provide some economic relief. This can be seen in the teams' evening devotionals. For example, one evening, at the end of a medical clinic, the Hope team met for prayer and reflection, and to discuss what they had accomplished that day. One doctor announced that they had seen over one hundred patients that day. In addition, they had referred to DRM some more serious cases that could have become life-threatening, had they gone unidentified and untreated. The group praised God and congratulated each other for their hard work. Then Amy stood up. She had managed the prayer station that day, where the American participants without medical experience evangelize and pray for

the patients through an interpreter. Amy announced to the group: “Four people accepted Christ into their hearts as their Lord and Savior. That’s really what it is all about.” The group responded with joyous cheers, shouting, “Praise Jesus!” and “That’s why we come here and do what we do.” Later, Amy expanded on the significance of this accomplishment, telling me, “We’re happy to do the medical clinics, but what we really want is to save souls and bring people to Jesus. We think that [people accepting Christ] is just great because the church will be here much longer than the clinic or longer than we’ll be coming here. Salvation is eternal.” I asked her about the people who had accepted Christ. She described each person, one a middle-aged man, another a Haitian woman with her child, and an older woman. Amy explained the process of the prayer station: “We first ask them if they are Christian or if they believe in God, but we make it clear that they will be seen by the doctor either way. We then talk to them some more and later ask if they accept that God exists.” Significantly, the prayer station for this medical clinic had been set up in the waiting area, so that Americans prayed over and evangelized the patients prior to their being seen by the doctor. In most other clinics that I observed, the prayer station was situated last in the cycle of stations, after the patients had been seen by a doctor and as they were waiting for their prescriptions to be filled. Amy implicitly acknowledged the significance of the placement of the prayer stations that day and the influence that it could have on patients’ inclinations to make declarations of faith, telling me, “We make it clear that they will be seen by the doctor either way.” This matter of the spatial configuration of the stations draws into question the motivations for, and sincerity of, those declarations. A verbal acceptance of Christ does not mean conversion in the way

that having oneself baptized does; number of baptisms is the metric used by most missionaries to evaluate the success of their mission. However, accepting Jesus is seen as "an important first step." On the next day, those managing the prayer station, inspired by their successes of the previous day, exclaimed an elated "Praise Jesus!" every time a new person accepted Jesus, such that everyone, including the medical team and the patients waiting to be seen, could hear them. In their debriefing at the end of the day, team organizer Steve triumphantly declared, "Saving souls and bringing people to Jesus. That's what it's all about."

American STM teams are influenced by the neoliberal interpretation of freedom, which valorizes the individual's personal initiative and responsibility over social welfare. According to Greenhouse (2012, 3), "Neoliberalism overwrites older notions of the public based in organic solidarity with a strong mechanical overlay—as an improvement, or modernization of more traditional social bonds." The neoliberal interpretation of freedom thus reshapes social relationships at the state and society levels as well as among individuals. Dominican STM organizers sometimes explain Dominican poverty to American STM participants in terms of the neoliberal notion of freedom that underlies "the American Dream": the notion that a person who works hard and behaves morally will succeed and prosper, regardless of racial or class background. Gregor, the Dominican director of a faith-based microlending organization, told a group, "The American Dream is to start at the bottom and then rise up. But the Dominican Dream is just to survive, to pull up a little bit. And if you do get up, you're more likely to fall." Gregor thus uses the American Dream, a familiar cultural framework for conceptualizing

morality, agency, and capitalism, as a point of comparison in order to explain the limitations and failings of the Dominican system. ABC and DRM have recently begun to explore the possibility of making microfinance part of their missions. The microfinance model, established by Muhammad Yunnis and his Grameen Bank in the 1980s, involves providing small loans to fledgling entrepreneurs, mostly women, in order to enable them to set up small businesses. Some anthropologists, such as Elyachar (2005), have criticized microfinance, asserting that it results in economic and cultural dispossession for people in developing countries who participate in it. American STM participants, in contrast, praise the microfinance concept as empowering and a path to self-sufficiency. However, some are critical of the ideas for small businesses that local people choose to pursue. For example, one team criticized a woman for spending her loan on a solar panel because they saw it as a luxury item. Actually, the solar panel provides a much-needed renewable-power source for the batey in which the woman lives; she leases it out and then uses the income to pay back the loan and provide for her family. American paternalism and discourses of development thus continue to prevail. American STM organizers and participants valorize freedom and express openness to new forms of aid, such as microfinance, that could help to maximize it; but they are still unwilling to allow Dominicans autonomy where money is concerned.

Many Dominican STM organizers and American STM participants of color assert a conceptualization of freedom that contrasts with the evangelical and late-capitalist ones described above. Like white participants, Frances and Dahlia, the only Black American STM participants whom I met during my fieldwork, found it difficult to understand the

conditions that they saw in the bateyes. But their interpretations of the racial and economic inequality that they witnessed were markedly different from those of white participants. Dahlia explained, “I’m amazed at the poverty. This is slavery, pure and simple. I can’t believe that conditions like this exist and are allowed to exist. I think while what we are doing is nice, it is not enough to really address this issue.” They perceived conditions in the bateyes as a human-rights issue and an example of global racial injustice. In a conversation with Antonio, a Haitian-Dominican STM organizer, Frances stated, “I get it for what it really is,” implying that others on her team had not reached (and perhaps were not capable of reaching) her level of awareness. In a separate conversation, Antonio confirmed to Dahlia, “Here and in other developing countries, it’s not about poverty. It’s about slavery.” Other Dominicans, especially Haitian-Dominicans, echoed these thoughts; one man told me, “The [sugar companies] don’t want the kids to go to school. You know why? Because they will never say the truth that they don’t want these kids to come to school so that they can keep them here to work in the field.” He continued,

> It’s capitalism. Not the sugar company or the government, although they are agents of capitalism. Bloodsuckers. All they care about is money, money, money. Jesus came to free us—free the slaves. But this is slavery. The spiritual is very important, but money makes the world go round. I don’t talk about this with many people. They like to help on the ground, but they don’t all think big picture, but it is all politics […] Many say that they are Christians and they are good, but those are just words, not action.

Dominican STM organizers, because of their close work with cane workers (and, in some cases, because they grew up in the bateyes themselves), have understandings of freedom and slavery that are very different from those of American STM participants and

missionaries. For Dominican organizers, true freedom involves access to education, legal residency or citizenship, and autonomy, including land ownership. While in the Dominican Republic, STM participants voice support for employer-provided healthcare, unionization, a higher minimum wage, anti-racist laws and policies, and pathways to legal residence for undocumented immigrants (as was noted in Chapter 3). But they do not take action to support such measures, which would promote self-sufficiency and autonomy and reduce the need for aid; nor do they connect the need for such measures in the Dominican Republic to similar needs back home.

Justice

The conversation between Debbie and Brandon that was considered at the beginning of this chapter may have been the impetus for Debbie's moment of reflection, later that same day, on the efficacy of STMs. "Where does it end," she asked, implying that there must come a point at which the American team limits or terminates their giving. This is an inherent tension or even contradiction in the work of STMs. Organizers and participants take for granted that their missions are successful and that local people are changed for the better by their work, as seen in Debbie's assertion about her group's successes over a span of 28 years. At the same time, though, STM teams must continue to justify their ongoing activities by asserting that the recipients of their aid remain unchanged, or at least in a constant state of not yet having changed enough. According to cycle-of-dependency theories, the recipients of aid are partly to blame for this, but so are the givers of aid. Rather than "where does it end," *how* does it end may be the more pertinent question to ask in thinking about how to bring about a world where giving is no

longer necessary. Debbie described her day as hard because the Dominicans with whom she interacted behaved in ways that did not always conform to her expectations of how gift-giving should work; they asked for and negotiated gifts, which made them seem ungrateful. As I described in Chapter 7, the model of gift-giving that guides STM work ultimately serves to reinforce and perpetuate the unequal relationship between those who give and those who receive, largely by restricting Dominicans' power to assert or negotiate their needs. It also maintains the satisfaction that Americans derive from giving, largely by shielding them from confrontation with the relational aspects of inequality.

Younger STM participants, participants of color, and some "reformed" STM participants like the mission interns at ABC, have increasingly drawn on discourses of social justice, much like the Haitian-Dominican organizers at DRM. For example, the mission interns I interviewed were critical on their former STM practices as high school students, and sought other ways to continue to evangelize and engage in biblical justice, something that they had studied at a conservative Bible college. They frequently defended their positions in discussions with older missionaries, averring that "social justice is in God's heart." While the term "social justice" is mostly encountered in the discourses of the American political left, justice is also central to Christian thought and figures prominently in the discourses of socially and politically conservative Christians. My participants, like Lupton (2011), often quoted Micah 6:8, "To act justly and to love mercy." In the wake of protests against racial injustice in the US in 2020, young former STM participants have started to center the concept of justice in their faith and in their positions on economic and political issues.

Ultimately, STM discourses and practices both reflect and reproduce economic and religious ideologies, meaning that these ideologies shape decisions about what, how, and to whom STMs should give. In examining these ideologies, I have sought to explain why conservative Christians prefer to give charity that provides temporary relief rather than working toward more lasting social change. Not to be overlooked, however, is the possibility that religious ideologies may provide paths toward advocacy or other forms of action that might result in transformative and sustainable solutions to the problems of extreme inequality and poverty.

In the conclusions of studies of volunteer tourism, it is typical for the author, having provided a long list of criticisms, to provide concrete suggestions for reform that are intended to promote inclusivity, empowerment of local people, and effective solutions to their problems. Although I have briefly described some recent developments in mission work at my field site that are being undertaken by STM groups themselves such as medical prevention in conjunction with treatment or through projects designed to foster economic sustainability and self-sufficiency, it is not my intent here to make recommendations or suggestions, only to de-mystify the ways that STMs fail to help participants realize colonial-capitalist interconnections and politics. It is not possible for STM participants to dismantle the structures of oppression that make up the white-savior complex from within that complex, for it derives its power and influence from those very structures. STM discourses romanticize and valorize the short-term sacrifices that Americans make in order to participate in STMs, such as giving up their vacation time, being temporarily separated from their families, doing manual labor, and donating

money. However, more long-term kinds of sacrifices are needed in order for impoverished and exploited Dominicans to have security and freedom.

As Jason often says, "a lot of people have good intentions but not direction." Charitable giving and voluntarism do not address the underlying causes of the problems that they ostensibly aim to solve. This is not to say that they do not help; many people do benefit from STMs. Dr. Javier credits STM outreach with transforming his life. An STM led him to his faith and to ABC, which provided him with many opportunities for education and employment. His goal in life is to serve alongside American STM participants in his role as a doctor for the Hope team, as a youth leader at ABC, and as the college scholarship administrator for Making a Difference, a cause to which he makes his own financial contributions as well. Many others, such as the García sisters, have benefitted from mission-built houses, sponsorships, and college scholarships; and still others, from school uniforms, medical care, and food. Success stories such as these, along with religious testimonies and conversions, provide STM participants with powerful confirmation of the value of their work. However, such success stories are always partial; there is always more to the story than acts of giving leading to a desired outcome, especially the agency and contributions of STM-recipients themselves. Moreover, these success stories become part of the dominant narrative even though they are the exception rather than the norm. The issue is not that helping is futile. In fact, it provides necessary relief. For instance, in 2020 with many Dominicans were out of work due to lockdowns and the pandemic's devastating impact on the tourism industry, STM teams—largely restricted from travel—sent cash donations that were quickly used to purchase food that

was distributed by Dominican volunteers at ABC and DRM churches who, through their sophisticated organizing power, had quickly mobilized an extensive effort to provide aid throughout the region. However, help is limited to this type of (vital) relief if it is not also working towards or alongside long-term change and justice. Justice requires intention, direction, and action. Justice inherently cannot be short-term; it is an ongoing process that is not limited to a week-long trip abroad, but must be striven for locally, in one's own community and society by means of innumerable small actions in one's everyday life. Justice requires action on the self: making oneself accountable for material relationships, recognizing others' autonomy, understanding how power works and relinquishing it.

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