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Naturalization
in the Wake of
Anti-Immigrant
Legislation:
Dominicans in
New York City

*Audrey Singer
Greta Gilbertson*

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Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
1779 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
Phone: (202) 483-7600
Fax: (202) 483-1840
www.ceip.org

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About the Authors

Audrey Singer is an Associate in the International Migration Policy Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Her research focuses on the settlement and incorporation of immigrants and U.S. immigration policy. Currently she is conducting research on the impact of the 1996 welfare legislation on immigrants. For her research on naturalization, she received an Open Society Institute Fellowship and a Social Science Research Council Postdoctoral Fellowship.

Greta Gilbertson is Associate Professor in Fordham University's Department of Sociology and Anthropology where she teaches courses on race, ethnicity, and immigration. She has published numerous articles on the social and economic incorporation of Latino immigrants. She received an Open Society Institute Fellowship and a Fordham University Faculty Fellowship for her naturalization research.

FOREWORD

In the 1990s, applications for U.S. citizenship skyrocketed. For the previous several decades, about 200,000 immigrants sought naturalization each year. That number has more than doubled in recent years; in 1997 alone, more than 1.6 million naturalization applications were filed.

Several factors appear to account for the dramatic rise in applications. The more than three million immigrants who received legal status under the amnesty programs of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act became eligible for U.S. citizenship in the mid-1990s. Furthermore, changes in federal law—terminating social benefits to immigrants, expanding deportation grounds, and restricting judicial review—rendered the status of immigrant less secure. Add to this a general anti-immigrant animus, as evidenced by passage in California of Proposition 187, and one can understand why some immigrants might seek the security of U.S. citizenship.

These are all “macro” explanations, offered by theorists familiar with trends in immigration law and policy. Audrey Singer and Greta Gilbertson here provide the data for testing the theorists’ speculations. In a pathbreaking study that analyzes naturalization decisions at the “micro” level, they describe the complex motivations of members of an extended Dominican family living in New York City. Their fascinating account of why and when immigrants seek (or don’t seek) naturalization is rich in detail, nuance, and even irony. They also make us aware that the categories of immigrant and citizen cannot be viewed in isolation, but must be understood within a broader context that appreciates the powerful influences of race, ethnicity, and culture.

The authors’ research must lead us to question the usual assumption that naturalization is the predictable and straightline outcome of the immigration process. The variety of motives cited for naturalizing—including that naturalization facilitates return to the Dominican Republic—will force us to think more deeply about the meaning of U.S. citizenship and forms of attachment.

Singer and Gilbertson note that the meaning of naturalization and citizenship may change for individuals over time and based on new circumstances. That is, citizenship—much as America itself—is a dynamic concept that cannot be adequately captured or characterized in static terms of “affect” or “identity.” Their work is a valuable addition to the literature, and the International Migration Policy Program is pleased to publish it.

T. Alexander Aleinikoff
Director, Comparative Citizenship Project
International Migration Policy Program

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INTRODUCTION

The motives of immigrants who seek to naturalize in the United States are a source of current controversy. Recent events, such as the passage in 1996 of anti-immigrant laws,¹ appear to have increased the benefits of becoming a U.S. citizen and the costs of remaining a legal permanent resident. Critics of recent policies have argued that the laws pushed immigrants to naturalize in order to retain social welfare benefits, thus cheapening the value of U.S. citizenship. Most of the debate on this issue, however, is based on rhetoric rather than observation. The extant literature provides little insight into how these recent developments influence immigrants' propensity to naturalize through shaping their perceptions of citizenship. How immigrants understand and view the costs and benefits of U.S. citizenship are important, because they are likely to be the most proximate determinants of naturalization decisions (Alvarez 1987; Yang 1994).

In this longitudinal case study, we examine the conditions that influence how immigrants understand naturalization, as well as the factors that influence their propensities to become U.S. citizens. Our aim is to learn more about how people think and act about naturalization and the meanings they attach to U.S. citizenship within a context of changing sentiment and legislation regarding immigrants.

Other research on naturalization from a sociological perspective does not offer much direction for understanding the nature of contemporary citizenship.² Prior studies focus on individual, demographic and national origin characteristics, such as English language ability, education, length of residency, and proximity to the home country as predictors of naturalization (Jasso and Rosenzweig 1990; Liang 1994a; Yang 1994). Although these studies identify variables that are correlated with naturalization, one of their principal limitations is that they neglect to explore the impact of broader social contexts on naturalization decision making and on the relative importance of individual characteristics. For example, the literature tells us very little about how family and

¹ The "Welfare Act" (The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Public Law 104-193, 110 Stat. 2260 [August 22, 1996]) made sweeping changes to the structure and access of public benefits for all residents of the United States, but changes affecting the immigrant population were, at the outset, the most dramatic and the most draconian. It established restrictions on the eligibility of legal immigrants for means-tested public assistance and broadened restrictions on public benefits for undocumented immigrants. It also required the INS to verify an immigrant's status before he or she could receive benefits.

The "Immigration Act" (The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, Public Law 104-208, 110 Stat. 3009 [September 30, 1996]) included provisions to bolster control of U.S. borders, established measures to remove criminal and other deportable aliens, and provided for increased protection for legal workers through worksite enforcement. It also placed added restrictions on benefits for immigrants including tightening the requirements for an affidavit of support for sponsored immigrants, by making the long-required affidavit of support legally binding.

The "Antiterrorism Act" (The Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, Public Law 104-132, 110 Stat. 1214 [April 24, 1996]) provided for expedited procedures for the removal of "alien terrorists" and provided for changes in criminal alien procedures, such as authorizing state and local law enforcement officials to arrest and detain certain illegal aliens, and providing access to certain confidential immigration and naturalization files through court order (INS 1997).

² The political science literature examines the relationship between citizenship acquisition and political participation, voting, and political change (see, for example, Garcia 1987; Pachon and DeSipio 1994; DeSipio 1987, 1996; Jones-Correa 1998).

community dynamics influence the process of becoming a U.S. citizen, despite ample research that stresses the critical role of the immigrant community and family in the integration process (Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). We expect that the community context and the family structures and practices of individuals influence individual decisions to naturalize through shaping adaptation patterns, as well as influencing how immigrants come to understand what U.S. citizenship means.

The literature also fails to provide a full understanding of how broader social and political contexts shape the social process of naturalization. Only a few studies that we could locate look at how the local and political contexts shape naturalization decision making. Jones Correa (1998), in a study of Latin Americans in New York City, argues that immigrants are reluctant to become U.S. citizens because they retain strong ties to their home country and face numerous barriers to political participation in the United States. As a result, immigrants either do not become U.S. citizens or do so only after living in the United States for many years. Bloemraad (1999) argues that differences in the political culture in the United States and Canada influence the propensity to naturalize among immigrants in each country. She argues that Portuguese immigrants in Canada have higher rates of naturalization than similar immigrants in the United States, due to Canadian state policies that promote and encourage naturalization.

While these studies provide valuable insights into the process of naturalization, they do not explore the impact of the new federal laws on naturalization decisions. The new laws are critically important for understanding the nature of contemporary citizenship acquisition. Proposition 187, the 1994 California proposal to deny social and medical services to undocumented immigrants, began a wave of more restrictive national legislation aimed at immigrants. The most significant piece of federal legislation was the 1996 Welfare Act. The Welfare Act, as originally passed, denied access to federally funded means-tested programs (Supplemental Security Income [SSI], Food Stamps, Medicaid, and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families [TANF]) to all non-naturalized immigrants. By downgrading the status of the “legal permanent resident,” these laws appear to have made citizenship acquisition more contingent on events other than those traditionally associated with naturalization, such as integration and permanent settlement.

Another context influencing the nature of contemporary citizenship is the transnational character of some immigrant settlement and incorporation. A spate of recent studies contests the inevitability of assimilation in a single locale and documents the existence of transnational communities and practices. This research finds that transnational immigrants often retain strong ties to their country of origin and that the structures of both the sending and receiving communities facilitate and promote such ties (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton Blanc 1992; Goldring 1992, 1996; Rouse 1992; Smith 1995; Guranizo 1994, 1997; Levitt 1996). The growth of dual citizenship both promotes and reflects the retention and creation of ties to the origin country. Few sociological studies have examined how transnational practices influence the nature of the citizenship acquisition process. It is in light of these concerns that we have undertaken this case study.

NATURALIZATION AMONG DOMINICANS IN WASHINGTON HEIGHTS

The Dominican Republic (DR) is currently the fourth-largest source of immigrants to the United States (INS 1997). In New York City, Dominicans are the largest immigrant group, and the second-largest group of Hispanics after Puerto Ricans. In 1990, over 80 percent of Dominicans in the continental United States lived in the New York/New Jersey region, with the overwhelming majority residing in New York City (Pessar 1995). Dominicans live in all five of the boroughs that constitute New York City, with the largest concentrations in Manhattan and the Bronx. The

principal settlement area in Manhattan is Washington Heights, which is a multiethnic, predominantly working class, and Latino neighborhood.

Until recently, Dominicans have had relatively low rates of naturalization.³ These low rates of naturalization are associated with several factors. One is the clustering of Dominicans in a few high-density Latino areas in the city. An ethnically enclosed residential experience insulates a group from “mainstream” U.S. culture, increases their exposure to institutions and practices from the sending country, and limits cross-cultural contacts (see Jones-Correa 1998; Portes and Rumbaut 1996). Although residential concentration does not always lead to low levels of assimilation or naturalization (see Portes and Bach 1985), it does appear to play a role among Dominicans. Other factors associated with the low naturalization are low levels of education and English language acquisition (Torres-Saillant and Hernandez 1998).

Moreover, the proximity of the Dominican Republic to the United States and the relative ease and low cost of transportation facilitate high rates of back-and-forth movement, which contributes to immigrants’ sense that they may not need or desire U.S. citizenship. In a study of Latin American immigrants in Queens, Jones-Correa (1998:5) says that first-generation immigrants “... maintain ties to a national community of origin which are kept alive in memory by the desire to return.” We would add that many Dominican immigrants actively maintain ties with their compatriots through continuous interaction across borders and between the host society and the home community. The growth of transnational ties, practices, and structures that characterize contemporary Dominican migration is well documented (Grasmuck and Pessar 1991; Graham 1997; Guarnizo 1994, 1997; Levitt 1996). The implications for citizenship, however, have yet to be fully explored.

Despite the disincentives for naturalization among Dominicans, naturalization applications have surged during the period of our study. More Dominican immigrants—along with other groups of immigrants—made the decision to naturalize in the late 1990s. For example, in 1997 alone, 1.6 million applications for naturalization were filed with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), nearly five times those filed in 1992. Moreover, this surge in naturalization represents a major departure from the stable rates of approximately 250,000 applications per year during the 1980s and early 1990s.

Several factors other than the 1996 anti-immigrant legislation have contributed to the unprecedented rise in applications. Applications began a sustained rise beginning in 1992, which coincided with the INS’s Green Card Replacement Program. That program required permanent residents to replace their green cards with new, more counterfeit-resistant cards. The INS encouraged immigrants to naturalize, and indeed many immigrants chose to become citizens rather than apply for a new green card. A second event came in 1994, when the first of approximately three million undocumented immigrants who changed status under the amnesty provisions of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act became eligible to naturalize. It is expected that they will continue to contribute to the increase in applications in the coming years. A third program that encouraged immigrants to naturalize was the Citizenship USA initiative, which by one estimate encouraged nearly a million immigrants to apply for citizenship. This program was shut down, however, after Republicans charged that it was designed to beef up the Democratic electorate, and

³ Naturalization rates vary widely by country of origin, by age at arrival, and by class of admission. In general, immigrants from Western Hemisphere countries and Western Europe are much less likely to naturalize than are immigrants from Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. In an analysis conducted by the INS, 46 percent of the 1977 entry cohort of immigrants from all countries had naturalized by 1995 (INS, 1997). The same cohort of Dominicans had a naturalization rate of 28.6 percent.

after an investigation revealed that some people had made it through the naturalization process without proper FBI background checks.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

Our qualitative case study of an extended family group, the Castillo family, included intensive interviews and participant observation during a period of three years (1995–1998). Interviews and observations of the Castillo family were supplemented by interviews with community actors, including immigrant service providers and local leaders in Washington Heights and other New York City communities. In the course of this research, we also spoke with about fifty other immigrants in the Washington Heights community and observed naturalization patterns among several other families. This information corroborated and complemented much of what we found in our more intensive study of the Castillos.

The Castillo family is a convenience sample. One of the authors resides in Washington Heights, and as a result of continuing participation in the community as a researcher and resident, had extensive contact with several members of the Castillo family and another family group originating from the same town in the DR. We chose to focus on the Castillo family because of its large size and complexity—in terms of generations and number of family members, its concentration in the New York City area, and its cohesiveness, which facilitated the gathering of information from all family members. Another reason we chose the Castillos was that most of the adult members residing in the United States were legal permanent residents and were eligible to become U.S. citizens (they had been living in the United States at least five years). The study of a family group facilitated the collection of qualitative data, because it allowed us to better understand the immediate context of naturalization decision making. Interviewing family members also ensured validity; in time, we knew people well enough to collect multiple and continuous accounts of events.

Although the extended family may be considered a single case, it is composed of a number of distinct nuclear and extended families. Individuals in these sub-families have a broad range of characteristics including legal statuses, age, time in the United States, life course stage, and settlement patterns.

To what extent are the characteristics of the Castillo family members similar or different from Dominican immigrants resident in New York City? We cannot provide a definitive answer to this question, but comparing the Castillos to Dominican immigrants in New York City on several socioeconomic characteristics shows that in terms of education and occupation, the Castillos are similar to other Dominicans in New York City, according to 1990 census data (see Grasmuck and Pessar 1996). Levels of education of the first cohort are low (ranging from three to ten years of schooling), and as we would expect, those of their offspring are higher. However, among the second cohort, the earlier-arriving group has a higher level of education than the recent arrivals. The higher levels of education of the second cohort are partly a function of their younger age at arrival and education experience in the United States. Overall, 39 percent of all Dominicans aged twenty-five and over in New York City have a high school diploma or more, compared with 53 percent of the Castillos in the same age range. In terms of occupation, the Castillo family members approximate the Dominican population residing in New York City. While about half (49 percent) of Dominicans in New York were employed as operatives, laborers, and personal service workers according to the 1990 census, 55 percent of the Castillos were in these occupational categories.

Our findings on the naturalization patterns of the Castillos (elaborated in the following pages) support research that shows a positive correlation between education, age at entry, time in the

United States, and language skills.⁴ Among the Castillos, more members of the second cohort (all of whom have higher levels of education and more English language skills than the first cohort) naturalized and they were more likely to have naturalized prior to the 1996 changes in welfare laws. Among the second cohort, those with higher levels of education were more likely to have naturalized than those with lower levels of education. Variation in education levels is associated with other characteristics, such as time in the United States, age at entry, and English language skills. Those with higher levels of education entered the United States at younger ages, have spent more time in the United States, and have higher levels of English language proficiency than the recent arrivals, who arrived at later ages and have lower levels of English skills.

THE CASTILLO FAMILY

The Castillo family (excluding spouses) spans five generations and includes sixty-five members, fifty-two of whom “reside” in the United States.⁵ Two generational cohorts are the subject of this study. The *first sibling cohort* is comprised of six sisters and two brothers between the ages of thirty-nine and sixty-four. Their offspring comprise the *second cohort*, fourteen men and thirteen women ranging in age between seventeen and forty-six. The majority of both cohorts have resided in the United States as legal permanent residents (LPRs) or U.S. citizens. The third cohort, the thirty-one children of the second cohort, ranged in age from infancy to age nineteen in the fall of 1997. Twenty-one members of the third cohort reside in the United States, and more than two-thirds are U.S.-born citizens. One daughter of this cohort has a child, the first member of the fourth cohort.

The Castillos are originally from the city of Mao, located in the largely agricultural province of Valverde. Mao is the largest urban area (population 68,000 in 1993) in the northwestern region of the Dominican Republic, which historically has been a major source of migration to the United States. In New York City, the majority of the Castillos live in Manhattan (thirty-one); others live in the Bronx and Brooklyn. Three members of the second cohort and their children reside in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Florida.

Table 1 summarizes the migration and legal status of the Castillo family over a twenty-seven-year-period, and shows both the growth of the family over this period as well as their migration to the United States. With the exception of the pioneer migrant, all members of the Castillo family were petitioned by family members and arrived in the United States with their legal permanent residency. The beginning of the migration chain is Zena, now sixty-four years old, who was the first of her extended family to migrate in 1969, when she was thirty-five years old. After ending her marriage, she entered the United States via Puerto Rico using a tourist visa; several years later she obtained legal permanent residency through an arranged marriage. By 1975, two members of the first cohort (Zena and Daniel), as well as Zena’s three children and her mother Julia, all had acquired legal permanent residency and were living in the United States. Julia received her green card through her son Daniel’s sponsorship and then subsequently petitioned five of her adult children. All except one of Julia’s children obtained their legal permanent residency. Subsequently, all of Julia’s offspring petitioned their own children.

⁴ We hope that we have identified some of the important dynamics influencing naturalization decisions. Our efforts might be useful as a platform for future quantitative research to design better informed surveys and statistical models that will enable a more rigorous analysis of the naturalization process.

⁵ The first generation contains only one member, Julia, the mother of the first cohort.

Table 1. Migration and Legal Status of the Castillo Family, 1975-1997

Legal Status		<i>1985</i>	<i>1997</i>
Dominican National	27	24	12
U.S. Legal Permanent Resident	6	15	20
Applied/Naturalized U.S. Citizen	--	1	13
U.S.-born Citizen	--	4	20
Not yet born	32	21	--
Total	65	65	65

As of 1985, the number of Castillo family members in the United States had increased from six to twenty members and included five of the eight members of the first cohort, eight members of the second cohort and four U.S.-born members of the third cohort. By 1997, the bulk of the family had migrated to the United States, including seven out of the eight members of the first cohort and the great majority of the second cohort. The U.S.-residing members of the second cohort have a mixture of U.S.-born and Dominican-born children. As of late 1997, thirteen members of the Castillo family had either naturalized or applied to naturalize.

THE CONTEXT OF U.S. CITIZENSHIP ACQUISITION: WASHINGTON HEIGHTS

In this section we detail some of the effects of changing federal legislation on immigrants in Washington Heights. We argue that Washington Heights—once an insular community that discouraged immigrants from naturalizing—transformed into an environment that actively encouraged immigrants to naturalize. Through a variety of sources, including New York City officials, the media, community organizations, and politicians, the community was showered with information on naturalization. It may not be overly dramatic to state that immigrants were learning about U.S. citizenship while under siege.

One effect of the change in policy is that it mobilized local actors in immigrant communities to help immigrants to naturalize. Voluntary organizations have played an important role historically in providing services to immigrants. In New York City, schools, churches, government agencies, non-profit organizations and for-profit businesses provide a wide array of services to immigrants, especially those related to immigration-related problems. In Washington Heights and elsewhere in the city, community organizations responded to the anti-immigrant climate and changing laws by expanding or initiating programs to assist immigrants with naturalization (Singer and Gilbertson 1996). Community organizations become more active in sponsoring citizenship drives, helping immigrants fill out paperwork, offering citizenship classes, and providing legal assistance. Service providers in 1995 and 1996 revealed that they were seeing a significant increase in the number of immigrants requesting assistance for naturalization.⁶

Various community actors, including city officials, took a proactive position by “packaging” U.S. citizenship as a way to preserve access to benefits and U.S. membership rights. In addition, the City

⁶ Some service providers explained that their reorientation toward naturalization was, in part, an effort to serve the large cohort of immigrants who had legalized under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) and who were now applying for U.S. citizenship.

of New York, like several other local governments around the country, responded to the federal cuts in benefits for legal immigrants by funding a network of citizenship assistance centers (the “Citizenship NYC” program) to assist immigrants in naturalizing. The city’s explicit motive was to reduce costs associated with providing local funding to cover assistance to legal permanent immigrants who were no longer eligible for federally funded programs.

In tandem with the efforts of community organizations to provide immigrants with information concerning naturalization, the Spanish-language media (television, newspapers, and radio) helped to publicize events surrounding the anti-immigration laws and naturalization. The tone of the press coverage in the Spanish-language media was often alarmist, and had the effect of heightening the anxiety of immigrants surrounding this issue. The most popular Spanish-language television channel (Channel 41) regularly broadcast news programs concerning these events. It also broadcast public service announcements that directed immigrants to various community service organizations for assistance in the naturalization process. The largest Spanish-language daily newspaper, *El Diario de la Prensa*, was another source of information on naturalization. Other events in the Dominican community in New York City and in the DR were linked to the anti-immigrant sentiment and legislation.

Several recently elected Dominican politicians, concerned about growing anti-immigrant sentiment, encouraged Dominican legal residents to naturalize (see Graham 1997). The 1994 constitutional reform in the DR, which allows Dominicans who become citizens of other countries to retain their rights as Dominican nationals, may have also played a role in encouraging immigrants to naturalize. Many Dominicans only became aware of dual nationality when Leonel Fernández, the President of the DR, in a televised speech, encouraged Dominicans abroad to naturalize and assured them that they would not lose any of their rights as Dominican citizens:

If you, young mother, or you, elderly gentleman, or you, young student, feel the need to adopt the nationality of the United States in order to confront the vicissitudes of that society stemming from the end of the welfare era, do not feel tormented by this. Do it with a peaceful conscience, for you will continue being Dominicans, and we will welcome you as such when you set foot on the soil of our republic (cited in Graham 1997).

OBTAINING U.S. CITIZENSHIP: THE CASTILLO FAMILY

In this section we focus on the naturalization decisions and behaviors of the Castillo family. How and under what circumstances did they make decisions to naturalize or not? Whether an immigrant naturalizes or not is the result of their perception of the desirability and necessity of U.S. citizenship *as well as* their perception of their ability to naturalize (Bloemraad, 1998). Individual perceptions of the desirability of naturalization change over time and are influenced by the broader environment and the circumstances of individuals including their economic and familial situations. Changing laws did stimulate immigrants to reassess the benefits of U.S. citizenship and legal permanent residency status. Indeed, one of the most consistent themes we derived from our interviews with Dominican immigrants is their view that the status of legal permanent resident is now insecure and that U.S. citizenship is necessary to recapture the rights they had as legal permanent residents. Moreover, many immigrants were fearful that the legislation signaled the beginning of an era of even greater restrictions and discriminatory laws. Sentiments such as, “there is no security with the green card;” “the green card is like a tourist visa now;” and “the green card is like having nothing now” were common refrains.

The other factor influencing naturalization is ability, which refers to the factors that facilitate or hinder an individual’s progress through the naturalization process and include literacy, language

skills, and the relative ease of fulfilling bureaucratic requirements. Ability is influenced by self-perceptions and ties to institutions and individuals. Ability and perceptions of ability to naturalize are subject to change. Over the course of our study, we found that immigrants were more likely to see themselves as able to undertake the long, complicated, and costly application process even if, by objective measures, their ability remained constant.

Yet despite the new incentives to become a U.S. citizen, many of the Castillos did not naturalize during our period of study. In the next section, we set out to explain why some have naturalized while others have not. To illustrate the naturalization views and behaviors of the Castillos, we classify family members into a typology that includes four groups: active sojourners, eventual-return migrants, settled migrants, and recent arrivals. These categories are organized around the patterns of settlement and incorporate factors that influence the decision to naturalize including age, life course stage, time in the United States, and gender and return migration patterns and/or plans. The migrant categories correspond roughly to the birth cohorts we have outlined above. All members of the first cohort are either *active sojourners* or *eventual-return migrants*. These individuals are at or near retirement age and are either actively sojourning or anticipate return migration. They lived in the United States for relatively long periods of time; return is often associated with retirement or the cessation of paid labor force activity in the United States, but it may occur earlier in the life course.

The second cohort consists largely of *settled migrants* and *recent arrivals*. These individuals arrived in the United States at younger ages, and with a few exceptions, are economically active. Most have formed their own families in the United States—families that include U.S.-born children. They return to the Dominican Republic less frequently than the sojourners and eventual return migrants, are less likely to own a home or property there, and have fewer immediate family members residing there. Table 2 shows the Castillo family by cohort and migrant type, with data on age, date of first entry to the United States, and date of citizenship or legal status.

While these categories are useful for describing the factors that influence individuals' perceptions and naturalization-related behaviors, they are not fixed. For example, several of the older members of the second cohort are classified as settled migrants but share some of the characteristics of the sojourners and eventual return migrants. That is, they own homes in the DR, return frequently and actively plan on returning there to live. Despite these ambiguities, we believe that these categories capture critical differences in the Castillos' views of naturalization and their propensity to naturalize.

First Cohort: Active Sojourners and Eventual-Return Migrants

This group includes four women of the first cohort who entered the United States as adults, have raised families in the United States, are no longer active in the paid labor force, and currently spend at least several months a year in the DR. Two of the active sojourners have naturalized and one has applied.

To explain how the active sojourners view U.S. citizenship, we need first to discuss the nature of their adaptation to New York City. Their incorporation follows a model of co-residence with children, participation in an extended family system, and the practice of recurrent return migration. Most of the first sibling cohort, including the active sojourners, have spent their working lives in the United States in low-paying jobs and have little in the way of savings that will last through their old age. In fact, some have used savings to travel to the Dominican Republic, and all have invested in housing there in anticipation of retirement. Many of the active sojourners have developed “patchworking” survival strategies in the United States involving co-residence and income pooling with other family members, especially children and spouses (see Kibria 1993).

Table 2. The Castillo Family by Cohort and Type of Migrant: Age, Year of Arrival, Date of Citizenship

	<i>Active Sojourners</i>	<i>Eventual Return Migrants</i>	<i>Dominican Nationals</i>	<i>US Citizens</i>
1st Cohort	Teresa (66) 1986 [LPR]	Mariana (58) 1982 [LPR]	Dolores (51)	----
	Zena (64) 1969 [1997]	Daniel (52) 1970 [1997A]		
	Isabel (56) 1981 [1997]	Pablo (41) 1976 [LPR]		
	Juana (50) 1979 [1997A]			
	<i>Settled Migrants</i>	<i>New Arrivals</i>	<i>Dominican Nationals</i>	<i>US Citizens</i>
2nd Cohort	Joaquin (48) 1977 [1985]	Maribel (43) 1991 [LPR]	Carlos (45)	Susana (17)
	Leonel (36) 1974 [LPR]	Jaime (37) 1991 [LPR]	Sara (41)	Alicia (14)
	Guillermo (45) 1972 [1996A]	Ernesto (36) 1991 [LPR]	Ramon (39)	Clara (12)
	Adela (35) 1974 [1996A]	Rafaela (33) 1991 [LPR]		
	Cesar (33) 1988 [1996]	Marcela (42) 1992 [LPR]		
	Gustavo (26) 1988 [LPR]	Nathaniel (38) 1992 [LPR]		
	Eva (31) 1986 [1992]	Jose Luis (34) 1992 [LPR]		
	Hugo (25) 1988 [LPR]			
	Rosita (22) 1990 [LPR]			
	Ivana (33) 1985 [1996]			
	Nicola (31) 1985 [1994]			
	Conchita (27) 1985 [1996A]			
	David (25) 1985 [1996A]			
	Alejandro (27) 1984 [LPR]			

Notes: Name. (Age as of 1998.) Year of U.S. Entry. [Date of citizenship or legal status: ‘A’ represents application pending; ‘LPR’ represents legal permanent resident.]

However, as immigrants age and their children form their own families, cooperative, coresidential strategies often become less feasible or desirable. Two key factors make permanent residence in New York City increasingly difficult. The first is the greater dependence on and the intensification of relationships with children and grandchildren after the cessation of paid labor activity. The second is the increasing prevalence of health problems.

Given the constraints that they encounter in New York and the opportunities to return to the DR, return migration, or sojourning, is seen as more desirable and more financially feasible than remaining in the city on a permanent basis. In fact, most members of the first cohort have maintained ties to family members in their hometown of Mao. These relationships make return to Mao feasible; without these family ties, many say they would not return. In addition, all members of the first cohort and several of the second cohort have either bought or maintained a home in Mao. These homes are paid off and immigrants can live in them without paying rent or taxes. The ease and affordability of air travel between the two countries has facilitated a pattern of back-and-forth movement.

Indeed, unlike other research that finds that immigrant women are more likely to want to remain in the United States than men (Grasmuck and Pessar 1991; Hagan 1994), we find that older immigrant women prefer living for at least part of the year in the Dominican Republic.

Zena worked in a factory for nineteen years and retired in 1991 due to health problems. Zena has three adult children in the United States: two sons live in Washington Heights and a daughter lives in Florida. Since Zena stopped working, she no longer heads her own household in New York, and spends more time in her home in the DR. Although she stays in the household of her eldest son and daughter-in-law when she is in New York, she does not feel comfortable living there on a full-time basis. For Zena, the arrangement of living part-time with her family in New York and living on her own part-time in the DR is the only way she can afford to live on her fixed monthly income of about \$500. For Zena, who became a citizen in 1997, being a U.S. citizen secures her SSI benefit and allows her to remain in the Dominican Republic for as long as she desires without fear that she may not be allowed back into the United States.

Juana, who has also applied to become a U.S. citizen, is in a similar situation. Juana worked in a factory for seven years, but stopped after a serious knee injury. She has been receiving SSI payments since 1993. Although Juana would like to live permanently in the United States—in fact, she has been on the waiting list for public housing for many years—Juana is single and cannot afford to live in New York City on her SSI check. Although she stays with her only son for short periods of time when she is in the United States, she does not want to live with him on permanent basis. Like Zena, Juana also owns a home in Mao and finds living there easier and more affordable.

Isabel lives in Washington Heights with her husband, three of her adult children, and two grandchildren. She worked in a factory for nine years and is currently not employed. Isabel finds co-residence with her children difficult on a full-time, year-round basis because she is responsible for most of the housework and the care of her youngest daughter's two children. Isabel and her husband also own a home in Mao, and reside there for at least several months per year. U.S. citizenship allows Isabel to escape a difficult family situation by facilitating her travel to the DR while securing her membership rights in the United States.

For these women, U.S. citizenship resolves several important tensions of a transnational residential strategy. First, it reduces the threat that individuals might lose benefits that they are currently receiving or that they might need in the future. Zena talked about how recent legislation threatened her only source of income and pushed her to naturalize:

Well, I always said to my daughter-in-law, I'm going to become a citizen but I never made the effort ... but now with the problem of the checks. I know with Social Security I won't have a problem but because they're giving me a supplemental disability check [SSI], I got scared. If they take that check away, I'm not going to have anything to live on. How am I going to maintain myself in my old age? So, I came back from the DR with the objective of getting citizenship, not only because of the problem of the checks, but there are problems with everything, now you've got to become a citizen if you want to live in this country.

Second, it reduces the risk that they could lose their legal permanent residency as a result of being outside the country for too long. Many immigrants were very concerned that their prolonged absences from the United States could result in problems upon re-entry. These concerns came to a head with the passage of laws that have resulted in the stricter screening of immigrants upon re-entry to the United States. As a result, even immigrants who have not had any legal problems were apprehensive of the consequences of remaining abroad for more than a few months.

A third factor that is critical in the desire to maintain membership rights in both the United States and the DR is tied to the immigrant's integration into their U.S.-based family group. Membership in the family is a critical facet of the Castillos' identity and forms the basis of their social integration both in New York City and in the Dominican Republic. The active sojourners said that their need to be with family was the most crucial reason for maintaining their right to re-enter the United

States. Thus, when asked why she was planning to naturalize, Mariana emphasized that it would allow her and her husband to remain in the DR without fear of losing their right to return:

Well, because now you go and you have problems when you spend six or seven months in the DR. And another is that the health of my husband is not very good now ... We think that we're going back to our country, and if you're not a citizen, you can't be coming and going every minute, because when you have family here, you're going to have to be coming back, but you can't be coming back every three months, every four months. This is one of the reasons.

Return to the United States is also seen as necessary because permanent reincorporation in the DR is difficult for returnees. Recall that most of the first cohort has been residing outside their country for many years. They are involved in few institutions on a regular basis (such as church, politics, and schools) and their social networks are limited. Although living in a small town in the DR is restful, many find it limiting, especially after living in New York City for many years. This, combined with some of the difficulties of life in the DR—including irregular, if not absent social services, water and electricity shortages, and limited availability of consumer goods—propels immigrants to return to the United States (see Guarnizo 1997).

Another factor that encouraged the naturalization of the first cohort is that fact that they have resided in the United States for many years, were exposed to information about naturalization, and had come into contact with individuals who had naturalized. This finding is consistent with quantitative studies that find length of residence in the United States to be a strong predictor of naturalization (see Jones-Correa 1998). For the Castillos, the family network was an important conduit for information and resources concerning naturalization. Particularly during the period of heightened concern regarding changing laws, citizenship and naturalization were a frequent topic of conversation at family gatherings. People talked about what U.S. citizenship meant, who they knew who had naturalized, how to go about the naturalization process, the difficulty of the questions asked, and the extent of English language knowledge need to pass the exam. Indeed, by the time that members of the first cohort were seriously considering naturalization, many had children who had already become U.S. citizens or were in the process of naturalizing. Their children were important sources of information and support during the process.

In addition, community organizations provided support to several members of the first cohort. Zena and Juana went to an agency for help in the application process, Isabel took citizenship classes at a local school, and Pablo anticipates taking a class to prepare for the English component of the citizenship examination. Despite their increasing desire to naturalize, lack of English ability was a strong disincentive for many members of the first cohort and continues to deter many of the later-arriving members of the second cohort. Nevertheless, all members of the first cohort except one were able to overcome this problem by waiting to naturalize until they qualified to take the citizenship examination in their native language.

We now refer to the experiences of several eventual return migrants to illuminate other factors that influence the decision to naturalize. For this group, return to the DR may not be propelled by problematic adaptation in the United States, but rather reflects their desire to return to the DR to retire. Of the three eventual return migrants of the first cohort, one has applied to naturalize while two others have not.

Pablo and Daniel, two members of the first cohort, are married and maintain stable residences and employment in New York. All own property or a home in Mao and envision retiring in the DR. Like the active sojourners, these individuals emphasized that acquiring citizenship was important because of changes in laws in the United States and the advantages of U.S. citizenship relative to their eventual return migration.

Daniel has worked in a plastics factory for the last twenty-six years and lives with his second wife and child. He owns land in the DR and anticipates building a home and retiring there. For Daniel, it appears that the anti-immigrant climate and changing laws have influenced the timing of his naturalization rather than the decision to naturalize. Although he had always planned on naturalizing, Daniel said that he had planned to wait until he reached retirement age. Previously, Daniel saw no immediate need to naturalize; however, given the change in laws, he felt it important to begin the process.

... one thing is the change in laws, another is that the majority of countries are accepting double nationality... that influences a lot, but really, the majority of people are doing it for the changes in laws ... for me it's really not relevant, because I've been working for twenty-six years and, God willing, I will have my pension, because I've always reported my income. But also, being an immigrant, you have to be practical ... you reach a certain age and you stop working and you want to go back to you country...

When asked what made him decide to naturalize, he said:

I think what made me rush my decision to become a citizen was the changing laws that we're seeing now ... because in any case I was going to become a citizen, but I thought I'd do it when I was sixty, if I were alive ... when I was ready to receive my pension ... it's one way to return to my country, and you know when you're a citizen, you don't have to come back every year like you do when you're a resident.

This example illustrates how naturalization is not linked to the immigrant's immediate situation in the United States, but to their anticipation of return. Mariana and Pablo also anticipate eventual retirement in the DR, but they have yet to naturalize. A detailed discussion of their situations reveals some of the complexities and contingencies of the naturalization decision-making process, as well as some of the difficulties of predicting why some immigrants decide to naturalize while others do not.

Pablo, who works in the same plastics factory as his brother, also wants to naturalize, and anticipates retiring to the DR. He also views U.S. citizenship as facilitating eventual return to the United States. Pablo said,

When I reach retirement age, sixty or sixty-two years old... if I want to go to the DR to live, it would be easy for me to say, 'I'm not going back to the U.S. for the time being.' I'm going to stay five, three, four years. I have a friend who worked with me, he spent ten years without coming here, but then he got sick, and the treatment there was very expensive. Here he had Medicaid because he had worked here for many years. It was easier to receive treatment here because over there it was very expensive. He was a citizen. I think it's an advantage... .

When we interviewed Pablo in May of 1997, he stressed the importance of citizenship citing the increasingly unfavorable laws and the importance of citizenship for Hispanics as a means to political power. But an hour into the interview, Pablo revealed that citizenship would also help him resolve a problem he has had with the city welfare bureaucracy. His concern stems from the fact that several years ago it was discovered that he and his wife had been fraudulently receiving public assistance. While he is now making payments to the state, his contributions, which are deducted from his paycheck by his employer, are often submitted late. Due to the advent of the anti-terrorist law and the stricter screening of immigrants arriving into the country, Pablo stated that he feared that he may not be able to re-enter the country if he travels to the DR.

If I travel now, for example, the way the laws are now, I could have problems when I return from there. They could check in the computer, and I could have problems. It's not that I'm afraid, because I have all the receipts, but it would be a hassle, I'd have to go to court, etc. I was going

to go back, but now I'm not because of this, not until I resolve this problem. This is one of the reasons for me becoming a citizen, and for many immigrants who are here. If I were a citizen, I could go back to the Dominican Republic without fear, and even if there was a problem, they couldn't deport me, because I'm a citizen. This is one of the main reasons for wanting to become a citizen.

However, as of February 1998 Pablo had not submitted his application to naturalize. In fact, in December 1997, Pablo returned to the DR and then successfully re-entered the United States in January of 1998. Pablo's reluctance to naturalize may be linked to a fear of being turned down for citizenship, as a result of his legal problems. On the other hand, since he was able to leave and re-enter the United States without any problems in the recent past, perhaps he feels less immediate pressure to naturalize. Yet another reason that Pablo may not have applied is that he does not think he is prepared to pass the exam. During his interview he said that he would probably need to take a citizenship class to get ready for the examination.

Pablo's situation illustrates that the decision to naturalize is perceived as risk-laden. The most benign dimension of this risk is failing the citizenship examination, because it can be re-taken. A more serious problem is that the applicant risks detection by the immigration bureaucracy. Among the larger group of immigrants we spoke to in the study, we heard from immigrants who were afraid that *any* past wrongdoing (arranged marriages, illegal or off-the-books employment, tax fraud, immigration fraud, etc.) might disqualify them from becoming a U.S. citizen. Heightening this uncertainty is the fact that the guidelines concerning eligibility in this regard are unclear. This confusion is not only a symptom of a lack of information among immigrants. Even among individuals working in community agencies, there was no agreement on what prior behaviors may make an immigrant ineligible for citizenship. Over time, more negative naturalization stories were circulating. These included stories of some immigrants who had been turned down for citizenship, and others whose citizenship status had been revoked due to oversights by INS officials, and who had been deported. These stories discouraged some immigrants from pursuing naturalization, and made others approach naturalization more cautiously. They also had the effect of shaping the naturalization process as a series of obstacles to overcome, and helped create an adversarial tone to the process.

Mariana's situation illustrates another factor that influences the decision to naturalize and the timing of the decision to naturalize—the role of marital ties. Mariana and her husband Andrés maintain an apartment in Washington Heights where several of her adult children reside. Her husband owns a car repair shop in Brooklyn where two of their three sons work. Mariana and her husband make annual trips to the DR and stay several months at a time. They plan to eventually retire to the DR. For Mariana, the decision to retire to the DR revolves around her husband's failing health; over the years, Andrés has suffered from a heart attack and several bouts of serious depression. Mariana appeared ambivalent about return, but felt that it was important for her husband's well-being.

At the time of our first interview in May 1997, Mariana said that both she and her husband were planning to naturalize. Mariana, like her siblings, sees citizenship as important because of changing laws. To her, becoming a citizen is advantageous because it will facilitate resettlement in the DR and return migration. Yet as of January 1998, neither Mariana nor Andrés have submitted their naturalization applications. Several factors could account for why Mariana has yet to naturalize, but it appears that the most important is that Mariana is waiting until her husband qualifies to take the examination in Spanish so that they can apply together. We found that many, but not all, married couples made the decision to naturalize around the same time. Or, one partner would naturalize

first and then convince the other to naturalize shortly thereafter. Of course, other reasons also account for the timing of Mariana and Andrés' decision to naturalize, including the fact that Mariana's husband is still active in his business in the United States. As a result, permanent resettlement does not lie in the immediate future. Indeed, Mariana and her husband have been traveling back and forth between the United States and the DR as legal permanent residents without encountering any problems. Also, neither receive any form of benefits, nor were they immediately threatened by loss of benefits. Finally, they may have been influenced by factors that have slowed the rush to naturalize, such as the restoration of some kinds of benefits and naturalization backlogs.

The experiences of the active sojourners and the eventual-return migrants shows that immigrants' understanding of naturalization is complex and their decision to naturalize or not is often determined by several factors. Our research underscores that the nature of integration changes over time, as immigrants age and their children form their own families in the United States. Indeed, as immigrants age, they are faced with economic, familial, and individual constraints to permanent settlement in the United States. The difficulties of permanent settlement in the United States, combined with an opportunity structure that allows them to return to their home country—including the maintenance of ties to the DR and U.S. citizenship—makes a transnational lifestyle more feasible and desirable than permanent residence in the United States. We turn next to the two groups that comprise the second cohort.

Second Cohort: Settled Migrants and Recent Arrivals

The settled migrants arrived in the United States at a young age and are better adapted to life in the United States than their parents or their recently-arrived cousins. This group consists of fourteen children of the second cohort who arrived in the United States at an average age of sixteen. Many work in semi-skilled employment in either the manufacturing or service sectors, and live in the Dominican enclave or a neighborhood of heavy Hispanic settlement in New York City (with the exception of one individual who lives in Tampa, Florida). These immigrants are younger, active in the labor force, and have families that include U.S.-born children.

Within the second cohort, we see variation in the timing of the naturalization decision. Several members of this group naturalized prior to the restrictive laws passed in 1996 while others appeared to have been prompted by changing laws. For example, of the three children of Zena who immigrated in the early 1970s, two have recently applied to naturalize. Two of Isabel's four children naturalized in the early 1990s, and two have recently applied to naturalize. Two of Mariana's four children, who arrived in the mid-1980s, naturalized in the early 1990s. As we shall see shortly, this contrasts with the experiences of the seven individuals who migrated during the 1990s—the children of Teresa and Dolores, who have not yet chosen to naturalize.

There are several important differences both within the group and between this group and their parents. Unlike the first cohort, the settled migrant women of the second cohort were less likely to value U.S. citizenship for the rights it confers on individuals who plan to reside outside the country for long periods of time. Instead, they were more likely to see the benefits of naturalization from the vantage point of a long-term resident of the United States. Thus, one of Isabel's daughters, Ivana, naturalized in the early 1990s so as to secure the rights of U.S. citizenship including the right to vote. In addition, becoming a U.S. citizen made sense to her because she does not anticipate returning to the DR. The decisions of two other second cohort women were also related to the fact that they anticipate remaining in the United States and feel comfortable here, but were complicated by the fact that both were romantically involved with Venezuelans and were traveling back and forth between the United States and Venezuela. They stated that they were motivated to naturalize to

ease travel between the two countries and to facilitate possible residence there. Adela, a daughter of Zena, also said that she was naturalizing because she has three U.S.-born “American” children and anticipates remaining in the United States. Adela applied recently, and was prompted by both the changing laws and the Green Card Replacement Program, which encouraged immigrants who were replacing their green cards to naturalize.

Naturalization was easier for this group because they could meet the language and literacy requirements. Because most members of this group have some degree of English proficiency and have had some schooling in the United States, the application and examination components of the naturalization process were not as daunting for them as they were for their parents. As a result, relatively few members of the second cohort relied on the services of a community agency, although many relied on other family members for help in the application process, or said that they were motivated to become a U.S. citizen after seeing another family member successfully complete the process.

The earlier-arriving men of the second cohort were more likely than their female counterparts to say that they plan on returning to the DR at some point in time, and their decisions to naturalize were not seen as a means to consolidate settlement in the United States. As a result, naturalization was approached with greater ambivalence. With several exceptions, the men of the second cohort were more likely to have naturalized since the advent of anti-immigration laws, and appear to have been pushed to naturalize by developments linked to these laws. As a result, their views of naturalization were shaped by their desire to maintain active ties to the DR—for example, to retain the right to travel, reside, and do business in the DR.

The naturalization outcomes of this group vary. One settled immigrant—Leonel—indicated his desire to naturalize, but as a result of a prior drug conviction has not submitted his application. He has consulted with two lawyers over the last several years; both advised him not to pursue U.S. citizenship at this time, or to leave the country. Guillermo and David both indicated that they were naturalizing to facilitate eventual retirement and business activities in both the United States and the DR. Mariana’s son César was one of the earlier naturalizers among this group; his decision was linked to the fact that he feels settled in the United States, although he holds on to the idea of moving back to the DR or establishing a business there. Finally, Gustavo, another son of Mariana, said that he refuses to naturalize on both political and practical grounds. One reason is that he anticipates returning to the DR to establish a business with his father. But he also rejected citizenship for “political” reasons, saying that he did not believe in becoming a U.S. citizen because citizenship does not protect Hispanics from discrimination.

Joaquín was the first Castillo family member to naturalize in 1986. When asked why he naturalized, Joaquín said that when he first arrived to the United States, he wanted to buy a home and become a citizen. During the several decades that he had resided in the United States, however, Joaquín decided he would prefer to live in the DR. Like the active sojourners, he and his wife have built a house in their hometown of Mao, and they stay there for as long as six or nine months. Joaquín’s resettlement project is complicated by several factors, though: he cannot support himself or his family by working in Mao, and his children and wife do not want to live there on a permanent basis. Joaquín’s case illustrates that the dilemma of many would-be returnees. It also shows that the meaning of U.S. citizenship can change over the life course. Although being a U.S. citizen facilitates Joaquín’s transnational lifestyle, he did not become a citizen for this reason.

The recently arrived immigrants of the second cohort arrived on average at age thirty in the early 1990s. No one among this group has naturalized or applied to naturalize. These more recent arrivals

are less adapted to the United States than their earlier-arriving cousins. Their working lives tend toward informal jobs and intermittent work; some are currently not working. Those who are employed work in places where a majority of their coworkers are Latinos. Most speak little English, and several lack a stable residence. Despite some of the difficulties of this early stage of adaptation to the United States, and a less-than-firm commitment to permanently residing in the United States, most of this group stated that they do not actively plan to return to the DR.

Why have the members of this group neither naturalized nor applied for naturalization? One reason may be lack of exposure to the concepts of naturalization and U.S. citizenship. Most of this group said that they had never seriously considered becoming a U.S. citizen until the advent of anti-immigration laws. Another reason the recent arrivals have not become U.S. citizens is that most do not think it would bring them any immediate benefits. No member of this group envisions returning to the DR in the near future (except for vacations), and none of them anticipate receipt of public benefits at the current time. In fact, even though several members of this group lost their public assistance benefits during the period of study, they did not view U.S. citizenship as a means to retain or re-establish access to benefits.

More importantly, many of the recently arrived members of the second cohort believe that they are unprepared to naturalize. Many said that they do not have the money for the application fee, the time to begin the process, or the willingness to study for the examination. Most importantly, many said they do not speak enough English. The language component was seen as the most problematic barrier for this group. Their limited language skills are due largely to the group's migration at adult ages and the nature of their incorporation into jobs and residences in predominantly Latino neighborhoods in New York.

In addition to the anticipated difficulties of the naturalization process, a belief that the anti-immigrant legislation had been reversed helped convince immigrants that they did not need to naturalize immediately. During most of the period of our study, we witnessed a period of intense concern and interest in becoming a U.S. citizen, followed by a period of declining interest. Immigrant-service providers in Washington Heights confirmed the more general declining interest in naturalization, reporting a drop in immigrants seeking assistance with applications as of early 1998. Nationally, naturalization applications have decreased from 1.6 million in 1997 to an approximate 800,000 in 1998. The waning interest of some Castillo family members mirrors this trend.

There are several reasons why 'naturalization fever' died down. Clearly, the heightened concern about citizenship was a short-lived phenomenon that was partly tied to intensive press coverage of this issue. However, the restoration of some of the benefits that were "taken away" from legal permanent residents also eased the panic.⁷ These legal restorations not only served to reduce some of the incentives to naturalize, but may also have had the effect of discouraging naturalization. Teresa's husband said, somewhat cynically, that people were naturalizing

because the government is taking away benefits. But it's not true. People say a lot of things. There are a lot of rumors. For example, people were saying that you could only spend three

⁷ The budget agreement of 1997 restored SSI payments to permanent residents residing in the United States as of the date of the Welfare Act and who were already receiving benefits. In 1998, eligibility for food stamps was reinstated to immigrant children and the elderly who resided in the United States prior to the date of the passage of the Welfare Act.

months in the DR. But that wasn't true either. The government makes a law and then they don't follow through on it. There are a lot of laws, but they're not enforced.

The long period of time required to naturalize is another factor that discourages some immigrants from naturalizing. Media reports of backlogs and stories of friends and family members who have been waiting up to two years to hear back from the INS on the status of their application appeared to have convinced some immigrants that naturalization need not be acted on immediately. As a result of the large number of immigrants naturalizing in 1996 and 1997, the backlogs are currently very long in many cities, including New York, where the process averaged more than two years from application to completion in 1998.

Finally, one further result of the contemporary context of immigration that worked to discourage some immigrants from naturalizing was the belief that immigrants were naturalizing "for the benefits." This belief, espoused by the majority of immigrants we spoke with, was the result of a combination of factors. Among the most prominent were the anti-immigrant climate and the welfare law, combined with the large increases in the numbers of immigrants applying to naturalize. Immigrants were encouraged to become citizens in order to retain rights, while at the same time they were told that they were abusing their rights. These messages had the effect of accusing immigrants of naturalizing for the wrong reasons. Among those who eventually naturalized, some felt that they were being coerced. One recently-arrived immigrant of the second cohort said that he would not naturalize at the current time because he did not want to appear as if he were doing it "for the benefits" (even though he does not receive benefits).

CONCLUSION

The Castillos' narrow interpretation of U.S. citizenship reflects the contemporary context of citizenship acquisition during which Dominican immigrants received mixed messages regarding U.S. citizenship. One way of negotiating the conflicting messages is to minimize the significance of U.S. citizenship by viewing it as a set of legal rights and obligations rather than as a change in affective orientation. Indeed, one consequence of government actions is that the transition to U.S. citizenship is seen by immigrants as less voluntary than it was in the recent past. Yet despite the role of the overall climate, our research dispels the notion that naturalization is a straightforward process that can be linked to changing federal policies. Even though almost every member of the Castillo family was fully aware of the fragility of their status as legal permanent residents and seemed to accept naturalization as necessary given the changes in laws, many did not pursue U.S. citizenship.

Citizenship acquisition is often conceptualized as a means to political incorporation (Jones Correa 1998). Given the context of naturalization, however, it is not surprising that very few of the Castillos embraced U.S. citizenship as a means to more active political or civic participation. When asked how they defined a "good citizen," many more emphasized that it was someone who was law-abiding rather than someone who was politically active. Very few of the naturalized Castillos had exercised their right to vote, and while many were aware that they could vote as U.S. citizens, little emphasis was placed on it in interviews and discussions. Indeed, many members of the family said that they had never voted in the Dominican Republic and rejected traditional politics—both in the DR and the United States. This is partly a result of immigrants' negative views of politics in the Dominican Republic, but is probably more directly linked to the obstacles to political participation in the United States (see Jones-Correa 1998) and the fact that many immigrants do not believe that there is any real possibility of reward from political participation.

The unwillingness to fully embrace an American identity should not be confused with a rejection of a sense of belonging in the United States. Although for the first cohort and some members of

the second, U.S. citizenship is part of a transnational strategy for maximizing scarce resources and maintaining ties with family members in the United States, these individuals still maintain numerous attachments to the United States that form an important part of their identity. Part of their ambivalence about U.S. citizenship stemmed from the environment in which immigrants were naturalizing, but it was also a function of their experiences and identity as immigrants and as Dominicans, which were fortified by strong transnational ties. Although most immigrants said that they no longer saw becoming a U.S. citizen as an act of betrayal of their country and identity, and that naturalizing did not necessitate giving up membership rights in their home country, it was not until recently that they began to view themselves as citizens of the United States. This is partly because they had, in effect, the status of “quasi citizen”: as legal permanent residents, they had the right to live and work in the United States, as well as the right to leave and enter the country (Aleinikoff 1997). Until recently, they also had access to most public benefits.

In addition, for most immigrants, being a non-citizen resident was the normative status of their contemporaries. As a result, many immigrants did not feel comfortable claiming an identity as American, even after becoming a U.S. citizen. Their conceptions of a U.S. citizen are shaped by racialized images of U.S. citizens as “white” and “native born.” This is illustrated in two responses to questions about the meaning of being a U.S. citizen. When we asked Zena, who naturalized in 1997, about her identity, she said:

I would say that one has to adapt and say, ‘I am an American.’ But I say that I am an American *citizen*. . .to say that I’m an American—no. Because American, American, that is someone who was born here, who is from this country. I would say to anyone that I am an American *citizen*.

Isabel, in responding to this same question, said:

Well, I would have to be sincere and say that I am an American citizen. But my origins, I cannot deny them, because I have a physical appearance, I have an accent that I can’t erase. So really I am a ‘Dominicana,’ but an American citizen.

Thus, part of the naturalization process appears to be immigrants’ changing their self-image and their views of the meaning of citizenship, something that occurs not only prior to naturalization but also after.

The second cohort is already practicing citizenship. Most have lived in the United States for many years, work and pay taxes, have established residences and families here, and have children who are being educated in the United States. The question for this group is whether the practice of citizenship—as a civic and political participation—will broaden over time. Certainly, their attachment to the United States is likely to intensify, given that their ties to the DR are less dense and that many anticipate permanent settlement in the United States. Whether settlement will form the basis of an active mode of civic and political participation, however, is an open question.

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