

# **Research Activism: An engaged anthropological perspective into addressing educational concerns within the Fundacion Futuro Lleno de Esperanza**

## **Abstract:**

In the summer of 2019, I volunteered in, and researched the Fundación Futuro Lleno de Esperanza in the Dominican Republic. I worked with and researched a group of 24 students, teachers, parents, pastors and administrators to gain a grasp on the education status of the facility, along with what impact their education had on the Haitian students fleeing to the Dominican Republic. I compiled interviews, anecdotal observations and drew conclusions based on that data, and found several cultural, political and economic factors within my first paper. After drawing my conclusions, I attempted to address a majority of the issues by helping provide a communal library within the facilities.

This paper examines the various engaged anthropological methodologies that can be used to implement and study the effects of the library, while outlining the specific role that the library will play within each methodology as well as the benefits and negatives of each methodology. This paper will first analyze the paradigm of engaged anthropology prior to the introduction of methodologies for the library. This paper will also explore the inherent contradictions and limitations associated with an engaged anthropological or participatory research approach towards the implementation of the library within this research project. However, this paper will outline precisely why such contradictions may also act as a strength for each methodology.

Therefore, the ultimate goal of this paper is to provide a set of unique methodologies on how to implement a potential solution within the Fundación Futuro Lleno de Esperanza. The conclusion will focus on (1) the analysis of engaged anthropology (2) The relevance of such forms of research, (3) the methodologies for future projects, (4) inherent contradictions and strengths within participatory research, (5) the relevance of such contradictions within this project, and (6) the role of alignment within this project.

## **Introduction**

In the summer of 2019, I volunteered in, and researched the Fundación Futuro Lleno de Esperanza in the Dominican Republic. I worked with and researched a group of 24 students, teachers, parents, pastors and administrators to gain a grasp on the education status of the facility, along with what impact their education had on the Haitian students fleeing to the Dominican Republic. I compiled interviews, anecdotal observations and drew conclusions based on that data, and found several cultural, political and economic factors within my first paper.

After drawing my conclusions, I attempted to address a majority of the issues by helping provide a communal library within the facilities.

Now, this paper is a follow up to the first research project, with anthropological, engaged, participatory research as its base. This paper examines the various engaged anthropological methodologies that can be used to implement and study the effects of the library, while outlining the specific role that the library will play within each methodology as well as the benefits and negatives of each methodology. Furthermore, a detailed analysis on the paradigm will be given prior to the methodologies in order to lay the basis of engaged anthropology prior to the explanation of such methodologies in an anthropological aspect. This paper will also explore the inherent contradictions and limitations associated with an engaged anthropological approach towards the implementation of the library within this research project, along with the inherent contradiction of participatory research in and of itself. However, this paper will outline precisely why such a contradiction may also act as a critical strength for each methodology.

Therefore, the ultimate goal of this paper is to provide a set of unique methodologies on how to implement a potential solution within the Fundación Futuro Lleno de Esperanza. The conclusion will focus on (1) the analysis of engaged anthropology and participatory research (2) The relevance of such forms of research, (3) the methodologies and the viability for future projects, (4) inherent contradictions and how they may act as a strength in participatory research, (5) the relevance of such contradictions within this project, and (6) the role of alignment within this project. This paper will hopefully act as a valuable tool for researchers wishing to continue this research project.

## **Context**

In July 2019, I traveled to the Dominican Republic to research the Fundación Futuro Lleno de Esperanza, a generous foundation led by a group of pastors, that provided education, lodging, and food for Haitian refugees fleeing to the Dominican Republic. I interviewed twenty four individuals of varying ages, positions, and locations within the foundation, and along with my own personal observations and conversations, I discovered key negative economic, cultural and political factors impacting the foundation and the education of the refugees.

Socially, I found that xenophobic pressure ran startlingly high within the Dominican Republic: particularly against Haitian refugees. This led the students to self-segregate, exemplified by the fact that Haitian students and Dominican students stayed separate during activities or groups. Unsurprisingly, according to several teachers and students, this issue became exacerbated as time passed, and each group stayed separate, acting as an impediment towards the assimilation of Haitians into the Dominican Republic system. Soberingly, however, that's the

scenario for refugees that have been granted legal status within the Dominican Republic. For pastors, students, or parents that have illegally entered the region have been faced with direct persecution, without any aid from the police. In fact, pastors, according to several anecdotes referred to me by anonymous pastors, have indicated a far darker reality with police aiding the perpetrators rather than stopping them.

**Interviewer:** How has the situation been between Dominicans and Haitians?

**Pastor:** One day, a Haitian pastor was walking on the street when a gang asked him for money. He did not have any money. When he couldn't give them anything, they beat him up, hit him with rocks and left massive cuts on his head leading to stitches. He couldn't even call the police because the police would side with the Dominicans anyway.”

The political dilemma facing Haitian refugees isn't much better. The two nations of Haiti and the Dominican Republic share a troubled relationship historically. When Christopher Columbus first came to the new world, he arrived in the island that holds the Dominican Republic and Haiti today, and named it Hispaniola, or “Little Spain”. However, starting from 1664, the French West Indian Company, a joint stock company created by France in 1664, made active steps towards colonizing the western portion of Hispaniola. Although Spain was against the notion of ceding territory, their weakened position on the global stage along with consecutive attempts at their territory by the Dutch, the English and the French forced them to legally cede the western territory of Hispaniola, which became St. Domingue under the French. This was done under the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697. The eastern portion that still belonged to Spain became known as Santo Domingo, and their paths would diverge yet clash heavily, both politically and culturally.

In 1795, further territorial shifts rocked the island when Spain ceded the rest of the island to France under the Treaty of Basle. Political instability continued when Toussaint L Overture, the architect of the Haitian Revolution, created the state of Haiti in 1804, after his successful rebellion against the French. His successor, Dessalines, held an ambitious plan to unify the whole island under Haitian control, including Santo Domingo. True to his word, in 1804, Dessalines invaded the eastern portion of the island and came short of accomplishing his ultimate goal due to the arrival of French troops on the eastern portion of the island. In 1808, Haitians intended to rid the island of French influence for good, and aided Spanish colonists in their quest to rid the eastern portion of the island of France, and they succeeded, taking back Santo Domingo under Spanish rule.

Economic depressions, however, rocked the Spanish colony, culminating into independence for Santo Domingo, but Haitian president Jean Pierre Boyer invaded Santo Domingo, effectively unifying the entire island under Haitian leadership. Dominicans however, were not happy to be under Haitian leadership, and many considered their leadership to be

authoritarian and corrupt. Their frayed relationship was further exacerbated under the different economic goals of the divided, yet whole state. The Haitians wished to maximize economic output in the sugar colonies, importing a massive number of slaves, altering the racial composition of the state altogether, while the Dominicans did not favor an overtly economic system, hence importing a much smaller number of slaves. This in the long run, exacerbated their cultural relations as the added difference of racial composition further spurred the rivalry and anger between the two groups.

In 1844, the Dominicans finally achieved much cherished independence, despite Haitian attempts to delegitimize the Dominican Republic, a definitive border was finally drawn in 1936.

Hence, the historical political tensions run deep between the two groups even impacting their current relations today. The economic situations of the two nations have not helped either as the two have flipped historically, where the Dominican Republic is now the far more wealthy nation of the two. Therefore, Haitians have attempted to enter their far richer neighbors in a search for economic opportunities, yet face entrenched political discrimination by both the government and the citizens living there. For example, educators living in the Dominican Republic have made serious accusations against the Dominican government, accusing the state of using Haitian immigrants almost as a scapegoat in order to rescue their political careers.

**Interviewer:** How has the political situation been within the Dominican Republic?

**Educator:** Proven. And right now we're in this huge, huge thing where there's this company called Odebrecht, where Odebrecht was like stealing money from the politicians, I don't know, it's really complicated. But when the Odebrecht crisis started, all the immigrant buses were out everyday and the news media was following it like, LOOK AT ALL THESE HAITIANS DOING ALL THESE BAD THINGS, but really we were just diverting our eyes from the Odebrecht scandal to look at all these Haitians that were stealing our resources, not at all our politicians that were stealing our resources but look at all the Haitians.

As the excerpt indicates, the Dominican Republic government had been faced with dire political charges, yet deflected public wrath towards the politically innocent Haitian refugees entering for increased economic opportunities. This reflects a stunning case of nativism shown by the government, and since state media holds a powerful influence within the populace of the Dominican Republic, the political situation against Haitian refugees is only getting worse.

As the historical divide indicates, the culture of the two nations have further split the massive chasm separating the two groups. Historically, the former leader of the Dominican Republic, Rafael Trujillo, cemented the divide when he took pride on the light skin of the people of the Dominican Republic while highlighting the darker skin of Haitians, which was caused as mentioned before, by the different economic intentions of the two groups historically. This deep

rooted institutional racism has sprung up, even against Haitians with legal status in the Dominican Republic. Furthermore, the language barrier between the two nations make it doubly difficult for refugees to assimilate and thrive in the Dominican Republic. History indicates that Haitians speak primarily in French, or Creole while Dominicans speak primarily in Spanish, exacerbating the challenge faced by refugees. My translator on the trip gave his account on the difficulty of such an adjustment.

**Interviewer:** How was your adjustment experience like?

**Translator:** They called me shithole. It was horrible and shameful to not be able to speak spanish. They called me names, and only after I was able to learn, then I made friends.

While I was learning about these factors on my trip in the Dominican Republic, I stumbled upon perhaps the most difficult challenge for Haitian immigrants and refugees. Their own mentality. It seemed outlandish at first, yet the concept of a “giving and receiving mentality” may be the hardest mountain for Haitian immigrants and refugees to climb. The concept of a “giving mentality” is the abject rejection of a situation due to a supposed lack of resources. This was perhaps the biggest chasm that divided the refugee foundation and their approach towards students. Several native pastors/teachers blamed a lack of innovation or an emphasis on outdated educational methods based on a lack of resources. However, the administration including one Princeton educated American educator, and the lead Pastor of the organization held different thoughts.

They held onto the central belief that any innovation is possible as long as individuals tried hard enough. For example, instead of rote memorization of the bible, the administration suggests analysis to emphasize cognitive thinking skills emphasized in modern western education. Yet, native educators and pastors held onto the belief that new books and new tools were needed to innovate, despite the administration replicating “modern” education with a single piece of white chalk and a blackboard with a lone eraser. The lead pastor of the organization feared that such “giving mentality” would rub off on the students of the pastors, leading to an abject rejection when circumstances were not favorable towards them rather than innovating themselves.

Such challenges may lead one to assume that perhaps remaining in Haiti will be the best choice for these refugees and immigrants. However, the high rates of gang violence, and the imploding economy of Haiti make it impossible for these people to return to their cherished homeland. Now, everyday is a battle, but unfortunately, not only with external factors, but themselves as well.

When I returned to Korea, I was contemplating the best way to address the variety of issues I saw in my trip. I decided on a library, and with a network of acquaintances, I was able to send Spanish books to the foundation from Korea allowing them to set up a communal library in

the region. Now the question remains in “how do we implement the library to mitigate the issues that I found during my research?”

## **Why Engaged Anthropology?**

The previous paper I wrote centered around an encompassing knowledge-gathering approach, where I aimed to uncover as many factors as possible. Now, based on the factors I found, I wanted to approach the research more in depth from an anthropological perspective. Within anthropology, engaged anthropology seemed particularly relevant for my current project, as the research style seemed to suit the project within the Dominican Republic.

Before I moved onto why I determined engaged anthropology to be the most relevant style of research, I first had to determine what engaged anthropology was. I found that engaged anthropology was observational research but from a biased perspective. In the beginning, this seemed highly contradictory and went against everything that I had initially known about research. I always believed that research was meant to be an objective, reporting of the facts based on observational or data-driven research or statistics. Every experiment, survey, and interview was intentionally geared to minimize the levels of bias within the experiment and in the overall results. However, engaged anthropology emphasized the importance of aligning oneself with a specific group of people or cause (often political). For example, a paper in the *Cultural Anthropology Journal* by Charles R. Hale (University of Texas At Austin), gave great insight into how the engaged anthropological methodology and approach would take place.

Hale was aligned with Costa Rican indigenous groups in their battle against the government regarding their collective property rights. His research was based on the single political bias or lense of the indigenous groups, and in turn this led to a deeper knowledge and insight towards the cause and ideology of the indigenous groups than any other forms of traditional research would have provided. However, what really reverberated with me is the fact that engaged anthropology not only provided insight into a specific political cause, but also helped spur actual, legitimate political change. This is because the author fights on the side that they are aligned with. They have a moral obligation to set aside their academic pursuits and dedicate themselves completely towards the cause they are aligned with. Knowledge would not be a goal, but would rather be an acquired item; an item picked up along the journey of the author.

Hale’s introduction was particularly impactful; it started off in a courthouse, where he wasn’t just watching from the sidelines like an observer or standard researcher; he was testifying. It inspired me to take part in engaged, activist anthropology primarily because I also wanted to be part of that process towards change. I had always believed that research aided change because it spread awareness. In every single club, activity or class in high school, teachers, guest speakers, advisors all told me to spread awareness in order to bring upon global or local change

within an important issue. Yet, that change if it happened at all, always seemed incremental, and I never even contemplated researching **and** being part of the process. However, within engaged, activist anthropology I believe I have found a way to become a part of that process, a process towards change for the better, while acquiring knowledge on the way.

While I was in the Dominican Republic, I also detected a startling distance between myself and my interviewees. To them, I was another foreigner, not a person that cared about their cause, but someone that would come and go. Therefore, empathy could never be shared, I had never been in their situation, and I had never fought for a cause like theirs. They didn't expect me to know what they were going through, I didn't expect to, but yet, the large gulf surprised me. I sought to remedy that within engaged, activism based anthropology but I believe that a specific form of engaged anthropology is critical in bridging that gap: participatory research.

## **The Role of Participatory Research**

Participatory research is a form of engaged anthropology except it shifts the roles within the research project. Teachers, students, investigators don't exist within an anthropology project based on participatory research, but rather they all act as investigators. The titles are gone, and the side you align with collectively becomes the investigators alongside you. There are several benefits to this form of research, as it creates a closer connection with the cause you are with, bridging the gap between the original research and his or her partners. Furthermore participatory research encourages collective action, and the research is able to become more comprehensive because it guarantees several perspectives rather than one. As Andrea Dryness (Trinity College), notes in her paper within *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, several investigators present many new perspectives and many differing opinions on how to address the issue, increasing the comprehensiveness of the study performed.

Furthermore, participatory research also guarantees a greater insight as people who are familiar and experienced with the situation are also investigators for the project, rather than investigators who lack a direct connection to the issue. Even though I spent a considerable amount of time living with the foundation and learning about its innerworkings and details, my experience and knowledge still pales in comparison to the many years teachers, students and administrators have spent in the foundation. Therefore having them co-investigate with me, may lead to far more insightful results than just investigating myself. I believe it will also increase the data or research material at my disposal because it will allow the new investigators to also conduct interviews based on a strict questionnaire or interview guideline.

## **How can these two systems be implemented?**

I was able to detect a subtle trend of division within the foundation. There seemed to be differing views on how to improve education standards within the foundation, and some teachers

openly distrusted other teachers. This leads to the possibility of three different alignments for the project. (1) The first possible alignment is with one specific group of teachers that argue that economic resources are critical in order to improve the situation, hence disagreeing with the current methods within the foundation. (2) The second possible alignment is with a specific group of teachers that believe that cognitive, western learning approaches are possible with anything, from pen and paper to blackboards, to books. (3) The third and last alignment is with the administration who allocates the funding and resources among the various sites within the foundation.

## **What will each alignment look like?**

### **Alignment #1:**

The first alignment is a group of teachers that disagree with the current teaching methods emphasized in the foundation. After I align myself with their ideas towards improving the foundation, I plan on giving them a set of questionnaires that they can use to interview or record data from the library. The questionnaires/ interview questions/ surveys will address the effectiveness of the library, and also how each group views the library as a tool, and how they plan on using it towards improving the education of students within the foundation. If a contrast is drawn results can be published regarding those differences and how they impact the education of students, and ultimately why one is more effective than the other.

### **Alignment #2:**

The second alignment is a group of teachers that agree with the current teaching methods in the foundation, and places emphasis on the maximization of resources. After I align myself with their ideas towards improvements towards infrastructure while maximizing education based on a western cognitive education system, I also plan on giving them a set of research protocols to follow as investigators. As the conceptual framework below will outline, a set of surveys and interviews will be used to gather data. Also, a contrast can be drawn regarding the results from both groups, and can be published highlighting those differences and eventually how they impact the education level of students, while evaluating the effectiveness.

### **Alignment #3:**

The last alignment possibility is with the administrators who run the entire foundation. This alignment may be the most feasible because they are ones able to make a clear difference in the direction of the education system of the foundation. The protocol followed will be the same as above, and the questions and interviews will be the same. This alignment will also investigate the impact on education, while evaluating the effectiveness, similar to the two alignments above.

### **Conclusion:**

All three alignments will have the same ultimate role of addressing the effectiveness of specific solutions on the ability of the library to impact the education levels within the foundation, and if this is reflected within student interest. The ultimate goal of this project is to improve the education of the refugees living in the foundation, and ultimately aid their efforts to assimilate and improve their condition of life within the Dominican Republic. I want to be a part of that process, therefore also including the role of engaged anthropology and participatory research.

## **Conceptual Framework**

As I was focusing on the conceptual framework, I decided on the dual options of questionnaires and interviews adjusted based on age groups. For surveys, I wanted to keep them short and concise in order to encourage a large number of surveys conducted daily, rather than one survey over an extended period of time limiting the information or data. I wanted to be able to gather a steady stream of information over time in order to show change or a lack of change and draw conclusions from the survey results daily.

### **Survey #1: Parent/Pastor Survey/Questionnaire**

The survey below can be used to fit Alignment #2 or Alignment #3 but can be only used for the viewpoint of teachers and adults. This survey is designed to record the observations of teachers, parents and administrators.

(This can be the primary application for a separate questionnaire system if more teachers become available)

1. Do you think the library is a valuable tool for your child/students?
2. What impact is the library having on the literacy rates of your students?

3. How is the library utilized within your class?
4. Did the library create a more enclosed environment among students?
5. Did this affect the culture of memorization within the school?

**Survey #2: Student Survey(MCQ Format)**

This survey is incredibly intriguing to me primarily because it allows both the parents/teachers/administrators and myself to see how opinions differ between students and from our observation. This survey system allows me to analyze the impact observed both by adults, but also allows us (depending on the alignment) to see what the students view as most helpful, allowing us to adjust certain functions of the library.

**Question #1.**

How often do you use the library?

Option 1: One book per week

Option 2: 2 books per week

Option 3: 3 or more.

Option 4: Other

**Question #2.**

What kind of books do you read? (Multiple options can be picked)

Option 1: Fantasy/Fiction

Option 2: Religious

Option 3: Adventure

Option 4: Non-fiction

Option 5: Scientific

Option 6: Other

**Question #3.**

Have the books helped your classes?

Option 1: Yes

Option 2: No.

If yes, why?

**Question #4.**

Approximately how long per week, do you spend on reading? (in hours)

Answer:

**Question #5.**

Do you wish to attend college?

Option 1: Yes

Option 2: No

**Methodology #2: Interviews**

The interviews will be a way of gathering much more comprehensive data but in limited quantity. These interviews can be conducted after the library has been implemented for several months, and provide us much more detailed data, but as stated before the quantity of this data will be lacking. The two interview sets below are designed for different age groups and can be used by any of the researchers within different alignments.

**INTERVIEW SET #1(ADAPTATION FROM ORIGINAL): Students (necessary to cite old paper)**

1. How do you feel about the library?
  - a. What's it like?
  - b. What do you and your friends like to do there?
  - c. What is your favorite book type?
  - d. Do you visit it often?

2. What do you normally do during free time?
  - a. What do you do during lunchtime at school?
3. How was the first day of the library for you?
  - a. Was it difficult to adjust?
4. How does the classroom with the library run?
  - a. Do you guys have textbooks and a set curriculum?
  - b. What skills are emphasized?
  - c. How did it compare to school before the library?
5. Tell me about your experience with learning a new language.
  - a. Do you speak Spanish or French at home?
  - b. Do you speak Spanish or French at school?
  - c. Did these books help you with the new language?
6. What do your parents currently do for work?
  - a. What do you want to be when you grow up?
  - b. Why?
  - c. Do you think school here is helping you achieve that dream?
  - d. When you grow up, do you want to stay in the Dominican Republic, or go back to Haiti or go to another country altogether?
7. What do you do with your friends?
8. What language do your teachers use at school?
  - a. How do they welcome new students?
  - b. Do your teachers promote diversity in schools?
    - i. If so, how?
  - c. How do teachers encourage students to work together?
    - i. Do you guys do any team-building activities?
      1. Can you give an example of a personal experience you've had with a team-building activity?
  - d. Do you guys learn about any foreign cultures?
    - i. If so, which ones? And how do you learn them?
    - ii. Do you get along well with kids of other ethnic groups?
      1. If not, why not?
    - iii. Do you tend to stay with kids from haiti?
      1. If so, does the language barrier play a role in it?

## CLOSING

Thank you so much for all your help!

11. Do you have any questions for me?

**INTERVIEW SET #2 (ADAPTION FROM ORIGINAL): Adults**

1. As a teacher, how has your experience been with the library?
  - a. What books do you emphasize?
  - b. What differences do you notice between the book choices between refugee students and native students?
  - c. Does the school use a technology based approach or a pencil and paper approach?
    - i. How has that changed with the library?
  - d. Does the school place a higher emphasis on vocational training or western educational training such as math or science or history?
    - i. Did it change with the library?
2. Tell me about the schedule of the school. (After the coronavirus epidemic) Does it still exist?
  - a. Do you set aside a time for the library?
  - b. How was the library introduced?
  - c. Do teachers allow students to decide groups for themselves or do they decide to put certain students together?
  - d. Have teaching methods shifted as time has passed?
  - e. Do you have any memorable anecdotes about certain students?
3. How do you accommodate language differences in the school?
  - a. If the school is taught using spanish, how does the school help Hatian students adjust to the language barrier?
  - b. Is the library used at all to bridge that gap?
4. What values are emphasized at school? (This question should be removed particularly as this has no relation to the coronavirus pandemic)
  - a. Therefore
  - b. Are those values similar to local traditions and religions?
  - c. What are some major tradition differences between Haitian and Dominican students?
    - i. Do these differences influence their learning during school?
  - d. What role does the library play within these values?
5. Tell me about the education system and college.
  - a. Is it possible for students to reach college through this education program?
  - b. How much does school influence future economic prospects?
  - c. What impact does the library have on the students' mindsets?
6. Any questions for me?

7. Thank you so much for all your help!

## **Limitations and Contradictions**

### **Contradictions of Engaged Anthropology**

One area I struggled to make amends with is the biased, and perhaps contradictory nature of engaged anthropology. As Hale notes in his paper, “the mandate of activist research” which is “grounded in the contradictions that the actors themselves confront” forces us to “straddle two disparate intellectual worlds”. Hale brings to the forefront the frayed nature of engaged anthropology: we rely on contradictions and bias to form our conclusions, but at the same time, attempt to present an academically objective solution with the use of science or objective facts, forcing us into a balancing act. We don’t use contradictions in the sense that our arguments are contradictory but rather the side that we align ourselves with may have inherent contradictions within their argument. For example, as engaged activists it is our role to align ourselves with their argument, and present a case on their behalf while observing the issues from their perspective. Yet, we also give our best effort to present an academic, clear solution that removes itself from such contradictions. As Hale notes, “carefully crafted space of identity politics requires us to withdraw and turn circumspect at precisely the same moment when indigenous activists themselves turn the most assertive... this discourages us from viewing political alignment as a source of inspiration for theoretical innovation”. And here in lies perhaps the largest contradiction within activist research. We as activist researchers must assert with their cause, particularly when they are the “most assertive” as Hale points out. Yet, we must also become the most removed during those moments and observe those assertions in order to maintain the integrity of our research. Therefore, this contradictory nature branches out not only within the arguments of our fellow activists, but within the research process in and of itself.

### **Addressing worries?**

This led me to consider possibilities on reducing the impact of such contradictions on my research methodology as possible. While thinking about this, I arrived at two key conclusions: (1) The benefit of the issue, and (2) The role of participatory research. I realized that the issue I was researching did not hold the same amount of controversy or political divide as Hale’s research did. His comprehensive study and research also analyzed a far more politically charged issue than the current issue I was pursuing. This leads to several complex implications. A politically charged issue increases the chances of extreme assertions, increasing the chances of a researcher being forced to make a difficult decision whether to follow the protocol of engaged

anthropology or to pursue their academic research. On the other hand, an apolitical issue decreases the likelihood of being faced with such a decision, and as my issue particularly focuses around a common ultimate goal, this further increases the likelihood of a consensus being reached between various groups or parties.

The second factor I considered was the possible role of participatory research in addressing these possible biases or contradictions. As mentioned before, participatory research was the process of co-investigating with our aligned group. This could possibly provide an opportunity towards resolving any contradictions because as co-investigators, the associated individuals would have an obligation to also uphold the integrity of the research. Yet, an activist anthropology project must always focus its efforts towards the overall goal of the project in and of itself rather than the research, hence giving free rein regardless of position within participatory research. However, for this issue as outlined in this paper, participatory research may play a large role in reducing possible contradictions within the research project. This is because since this issue is less divisive, it may provide an opportunity for co-investigators to further increase their obligation towards the honor.

### **Limitations: Alignment 1**

Alignment 1 may have contradictions or biases, as common argument does point out that western teaching methods can be emulated with basic resources. For example, western education emphasizes cognitive thinking and as many administrators have pointed out, the same exercises such as annotation and analysis does not have to occur within a technological setting. Therefore, a possible limitation for this alignment may be the contradictory stance they take themselves towards western education. Yet, it will still be interesting to see how the arrival of a library changes their position at all towards western education.

### **Limitations: Alignment 2**

Alignment 2 also faces possible difficulties as many teachers within the foundation emphasize education the way they learned it: rote memorization. They emphasize minimal resources and believe that memorization is the best way to approach education. They idolize the education systems of Korea for their intense academic pressure, yet ignore Korea's movement towards a westernized education approach of cognitive education, and less memorization. Therefore, a possible limitation may be the limiting of the potential of the library.

### **Limitations: Alignment 3**

Alignment 3 faces possible limitations as well because the administrators of the foundation have to balance the budget between the books, the schedules, and the foundation in and of itself. Although the books are indeed free, the administrators/educators may not be able to formulate innovative activities with the books as other groups might. Therefore it will be interesting to see what their stance on the library now is, after they have received the books.

## **Suggestions for Implementation**

### **Original Implementation Plan**

Implementation can occur in several different ways. The overall implementation of the library should be left to the administrators as they have already begun filling the library building with the book shipments. I think that the library should run on a check out basis, or perhaps act as a temporary area to read and explore and then have students return them after their visit, and then come back the following day for more novels. As for the implementation of the research project, a highly likely possibility may be the addition of small surveys designed for students to pick up and fill out before they leave the building daily. Otherwise, the option for teachers to fill out surveys is also open, as they observe the students within classes and the library and provide updates daily.

The interview protocol as outlined in the conceptual framework can be then used simultaneously in tandem with the survey system as the interviews can be conducted individually for teachers around June or July. Therefore, at the end of data collection, an ideal situation would be several recorded interviews along with daily updates provided by the surveys by both teachers and students.

### **COVID-19 Situation Contingency Plan**

Unfortunately, with the arrival of the coronavirus in the Dominican Republic, school has been currently placed on hold, making it difficult for students to directly give their opinions on the library. However, an alternate research plan can be put into place in order to ensure the safety of all the students, educators and administrators. A possible plan may be to have teachers give their opinions towards the new library along with ideas on how they would utilize it to further the education of students. Furthermore, a survey process that would determine the plans of all the teachers would be very valuable towards the research project. As the library already has been operational, data up to now may also provide valuable insight into how the library could provide

educational benefits towards the facility. Ideally, direct research could resume when the COVID-19 situation comes to an end in the Dominican Republic along with several other neighboring nations.

Another possible idea may be to alter the implementation of the library altogether in order to help educate students within the foundation despite the COVID-19 system. A checking out system could be put into place, where students would be able to check out or borrow books during the coronavirus quarantine and use it to cover schoolwork missed. This could be particularly useful in both an activist and research perspective, as technological tools not available to students there could be replaced with the increased role of the library.

## **Conclusion**

This paper covered the possibility of an application of engaged anthropology towards the issue of improving education standards within a Haitian refugee foundation within the Dominican Republic. An application of engaged activist anthropology in tandem with participatory research provides an opportunity to gain insights and knowledge about the education standards and the community that we would not have been able to find out using traditional, objective research methodologies. An explanation on precisely why such forms of research are critical for this project is explored within this paper, and the limitations of such a research methodology is also addressed. There is also a detailed explanation of possibilities towards implementation and how that implementation will shift based on the situation with COVID-19.

## **Final Recommendations**

As we reach the end of this academic paper, I believe final recommendations towards which alignment to take is necessary within this paper. Therefore, my final recommendation is to follow alignment 3, primarily because it leads to the smallest number of possible contradictions within our research process and project. Alignment 3 also follows the root of activist research, as it allows us as researchers to make tangible changes to the community, which is the primary goal of activist research rather than the research process in and of itself. Hence, alignment 3 will be the most feasible from both an activist and research based perspective.

