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### The Guira As a Cultural Object

Every day while as life passes by we tend to overlook objects, without realizing that they add meaning to our culture. Such objects that add meaning and value to everyone's culture are considered cultural artifacts in the social sciences such as anthropology, sociology, and ethnology. Anything can be a cultural object, as stated in *Fieldworking* by Bonnie Stone Sunstein and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater, a cultural object can go from "tools, musical instruments, foods" to "toys, jewelry, ceremonial objects and clothes"(124). In this essay, the cultural artifact that I will be focusing on is a musical instrument from the Dominican Republic called "Guira".

The Dominican Republic is well known for its tropical folklore, involving many genres of music like merengue, bachata, and Perico Ripiao just to name a few. As someone who was born and raised in the Dominican Republic, music has been always present in my life just as it is in every Dominican I've ever met no matter where they might be. A guira is a musical instrument, a metal scraper mainly used in merengue and Perico Ripiao ( which is like a merengue but faster ) and in this way the guira becomes a cultural artifact reminding me of home and moments spent there. Merengue is the national dance in the Dominican Republic which explains the importance of the guira and the familiarity every Dominican has to it. I chose the

guira as my cultural artifact due to its distinction with happiness and the good vibes that it radiates with its sound. It represents the Dominican race because although we can be very loud, we are also easy going and humble like the guira. That is another reason why I chose the guira as my cultural artifact, it also represents a moment in time from when I was little.

The guira is considered a metal idiophone, which does not give it the best look since it is a metal scraper. It is made out of a metal sheet which most of the time is steel, hand-fashioned into a cylindrical shape with many sound-producing nodules that create sound when scraped with a stiff brush made out of metal as well. Moreover, when someone from another country sees a guira I can imagine the confusion that is going through their head since if you're not from a culture that includes guira as one of their mainly played instruments, it can be very confusing at first due to its unusual appearance. Although there might be a little bit of confusion at first, I have no doubt that when the guira starts playing it lights up the mood of every body present in that room. That is one of the main reasons I decided to use the guira as my personal/cultural artifact, because of its distinct way of lighting up moments and making them more beautiful than what they already are. The guira is played in a particular way that many people tend to imitate, for the feeling and excitement that it adds to the moment.

The guira is played by the performer firmly grabbing it by one handle on the side of the guira while scraping it with their dominant hand with the stiff brush. At any Dominican party that you go to, you will find people imitating the gestures of the performer with their hand while merengue is playing on the back; even though people don't always carry a guira around, they tend to imitate the performer's gestures because of the powerful meaning it adds to the music and in my case, because it reminds me of my childhood when my family used to get together and

play music, the kids used to always imitate the elder's movements while they played and it's a habit that has prevailed through time. However, even though the guira is considered the most common instrument in the Dominican Republic, it was not always accepted by the general public due to its strong association with African-rooted dance that merengue is. The guira was not accepted broadly due to the beliefs of the white upper class and those with European roots in the country.

In conclusion, all the reasons why I chose guira as my cultural artifact are stated in a clear way since the guira is an instrument that brings many memories every time I hear it play. The memories go back to when I was little in my grandmas town Navarrete, Santiago. to just the other week dancing merengue in my city Santiago. I believe everybody should listen to a merengue or tipico and realize what they think about the guira, i know it will bring joy to everyone.