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Investigating the investigators:

AN ANALYSIS OF *THE PUERTO RICAN STUDY*

MADELEINE E. LÓPEZ

ABSTRACT

This essay utilizes *The Puerto Rican Study* to shed light on the relationship between social scientific research and the Puerto Rican community, specifically in the arena of public education and language policy formation. *The Puerto Rican Study*, along with antecedent studies produced at the height of the Great Migration, reveals the existence of forgotten alternatives to the “culture of poverty” thesis and lost opportunities for the development of educational reform that respected the linguistic and cultural particularities of the Puerto Rican community and its children. [Key Words: culture of poverty thesis; Great Migration; Puerto Rican students in New York City; language policy; New York City; education]



Puerto Rican children in a New York City Elementary school (circa 1950s). Photographer Carl Levins Associates. The Office of Information for Puerto Rico. Archives of the Puerto Rican Diaspora, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College, CUNY. Reprinted, by permission, from Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños.

In 1968, Richard Margolis, a researcher employed by the Puerto Rican community group ASPIRA, stated that Puerto Ricans constituted one of the most studied and yet least understood groups in the United States (Margolis 1968). By the late 1960s, social scientists of various disciplines had conducted numerous studies on the Puerto Rican presence in New York City. These studies, by and large, focused on the social, political, and cultural adjustment process of the rapidly growing migrant community. The majority proposed recommendations aimed towards the cultural assimilation of Puerto Ricans into the linguistic and ethnic mainstream. These studies, largely devoid of any substantial analysis of the long-term, historically rooted, economic repercussions of colonialism and discrimination, posited Puerto Ricans as a community with “inherent problems” (Dworkis 1957; Rand 1958; Sexton 1965).

The notion of Puerto Ricans as a people with “inherent problems” gained credence with the 1963 publication of *Beyond the Melting Pot* by Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Sociologists Glazer and Moynihan argued that Puerto Ricans, along with other racial and ethnic communities, were incapable of successful assimilation into American society. Summarizing this assessment, Glazer and Moynihan wrote, “Nothing—in education, in work experience, in work training or work discipline, in family attitudes, in physical health—gave to Puerto Rican migrants an advantage in New York City” (Glazer and Moynihan 1963: 87–122). Oscar Lewis’ enormously influential *La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty*, published in 1966, further reinforced the social scientific construction of Puerto Ricans as a community with inherent moral deficiencies that lacked the necessary moral code and work ethic to improve their social, political, and economic condition. The acceptance of both books in academic and policy-making circles

popularized what came to be known as the “culture of poverty” thesis and stigmatized the Puerto Rican community. The implications of the culture of poverty thesis reverberated beyond the academy and impacted the relationship between Puerto Ricans and the state. Although scholars of Puerto Rican history and culture have effectively taken it to task, correctly articulating its place and true meaning, the culture of poverty thesis continues to be resurrected, in various forms, to this very day (Rodriguez 1989; Whalen 2000). One need only look through Philippe Bourgois’ *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio* (Bourgois 2002) to find similar representations of male-to-male, female-to-male, and familial toxic dysfunctionalities labeled as “fascinating” and “insightful” by the popular press and largely accepted by academic circles.¹

Despite their influence, studies of Puerto Ricans in New York did not begin with the works of Glazer, Moynihan, and Lewis. At the height of the Great Migration, social scientists preoccupied themselves with studies of Puerto Ricans and their adjustment to life in the U.S. Along with health, housing, and employment concerns, a significant number of these works focused on the place of Puerto Rican children in the New York City public school system. Education officials, many of whom lacked direct contact with the schools and their student populations, simultaneously feared and blamed Puerto Rican children for not assimilating quickly enough, due primarily to their perceived inability to learn English. A host of educators trained in social science methodology, however, produced studies that presented alternative portrayals of the challenges Puerto Rican students faced and offered solutions that acknowledged the specific cultural needs of the Puerto Rican community. While the top-down approach social scientists have traditionally employed in studying the Puerto Rican community deserves criticism, it is also necessary to historicize these research endeavors within their particular context (Rodriguez 1989; Haslip-Viera, Falcón, and Matos Rodríguez 2004).

The Puerto Rican Study, a research project initiated in 1953, concluded in 1957, and published in 1958, merits particular attention. In this essay, I use *The Puerto Rican Study* and its antecedents to examine the historical development of Puerto Ricans as a subject of social scientific inquiry and their role in the evolution of educational and language policy in New York City public schools. Closely heeding Carmen Whalen’s call to historicize the culture of poverty thesis, I underscore the use of “problem” and

““ The ‘Puerto Rican problem’ was often found in reports detailing the impact of Puerto Rican migration on New York City services. ””

its association with educating Puerto Ricans (Whalen 2000). The “Puerto Rican problem” was often found in reports detailing the impact of Puerto Rican migration on New York City services. However, the term was susceptible to different interpretations. The “problem” was defined as widely as signifying truancy, overcrowding, and English-language acquisition.

Later scholars have generally dismissed the significance and lasting impact of *The Puerto Rican Study*, conflating it along with other social scientific studies of Puerto Ricans that cast this community as socially and culturally dysfunctional. Angela Jorge

in her 1983 dissertation strongly criticizes *The Puerto Rican Study* for failing to strongly advocate and implement its recommendations. Jorge's work is invaluable as a work of educational policymaking for not only understanding the limits of this study but also for promoting alternative pedagogical approaches. It is and will remain important as it is currently the only in-depth analysis of the *Study*. While mindful of Jorge, I am presenting a historical analysis of *The Puerto Rican Study* with a careful examination of the communication between researchers. A close reading of the *Study*, with consideration of the context in which it was written, reveals an alternate story. Organizers of this report employed a methodology that seriously took into account the educational needs and cultural particularities of the Puerto Rican community. More specifically, they respected the need for the maintenance of the Spanish language, a crucial marker of Puerto Rican cultural identity, as essential for the success of Puerto Rican pupils. Researchers also developed curriculum materials that included bilingual worksheets and syllabi that hereto had not been provided for bilingual students. Moreover, by involving Puerto Rican parents and community members, the *Study* challenged racist and culturally insensitive portrayals of child delinquency, gender roles, and family responsibility. *The Puerto Rican Study* serves as an example of a forgotten alternative to social scientific studies of Puerto Ricans rooted in the culture of poverty thesis and presents a lost opportunity to implement a comprehensive and culturally sensitive approach to the challenges Puerto Rican students faced in New York City public schools.

The Great Migration, public schools and social scientific research

The Great Migration of Puerto Ricans from the island to the U.S. mainland resulted from a number of “push-and-pull” factors. On the island, Luis Muñoz Marín's economic development program Operation Bootstrap “pushed” thousands of Puerto Ricans to the Northeast. Hailed as a model for democratic and capitalist development, this program promised to usher the island of Puerto Rico into a modern era. But with the shift in the 1940s from an agricultural-based economy to an industrial one, many Puerto Ricans found themselves displaced from their land and property. Factories, which had been lured to the island with tax incentives, could not employ the whole of the working population (Dietz 1986). Needing a significant portion of the population to migrate, Puerto Rican officials encouraged relocation to the Northeast by offering low airfares to New York City and negotiating employment opportunities. These served as the “pull factors” along with visions of a “promise land” of opportunities. In 1940, 61,463 Puerto Ricans lived in New York City; by 1950, the number had jumped to 254,880. An estimated 42,000 Puerto Ricans arrived every year in New York between 1946 and 1956; these migrants reflected the diversity of the island's population, including class, race, urban/rural living experience, and job occupations (History Task Force 1979).

While Puerto Rican migration to New York placed tremendous pressure on all of the city's social services, public education was particularly impacted. New York City schools had not experienced such an influx of non-English speaking pupils since prior to the restrictive immigration policies of 1924 that effectively halted European immigration. The dramatic numbers of Puerto Rican students entering the city's schools, at all levels, presented educators and administrators alike with a pedagogical challenge of unprecedented proportions. The fact that Puerto Ricans were American citizens, and therefore entitled to certain rights, further challenged educators in their efforts to adequately meet the needs of English-language learners in the

classroom. As Puerto Rican children and their families continued to arrive by the thousands throughout the 1940s, school officials scrambled to make sense of the situation and take stock of their available resources.

Social scientists viewed the Puerto Rican Great Migration with scholarly interest. After World War II, the mission of university-trained social scientists and those who funded them became to authoritatively explain the requisite democratic values for becoming “good” and patriotic citizens (Purcell 1973). The migration of thousands of Puerto Ricans to the U.S., and New York City in particular, challenged scholars and policy-makers alike to re-think the place of racially ambiguous non-English speaking citizens in the social, political, economic, and educational fabric of the nation.

In New York City, the municipal government along with private foundations, poured significant amounts of money into social scientific studies aimed at analyzing the cumulative impact of Puerto Ricans on the city and their potential to assimilate into the mainstream (Jorge 1983). Laura Briggs has demonstrated how overstudied Puerto Ricans were in the mid-twentieth century: “For a time in the 1940s and 1950s, it seemed that every urban institution of higher education in the Northeast—New York University, City College of New York, Princeton University, Columbia, Hofstra, Rutgers, Fordham, Harvard, MIT—had a significant research project on Puerto Ricans in New York City. East Harlem was almost as studied as the island itself” (Briggs 2002: 170). Many of these early works centered on the place of Puerto Rican students in public education. For educators, reformers, and social scientists, schools were the main tool for transforming pupils into English-speaking, civic-minded Americans. School officials and administrators relied on the survey research, psychological experiments, and pedagogical studies of social scientists to inform their decision-making (Converse 1987). Social scientists thus played an essential role in developing the curriculum reform and community-relations strategies that the influx of Puerto Rican students necessitated.²

The challenges newly arrived Puerto Rican migrants posed to New York City public schools, as articulated by social scientists, became framed as the Puerto Rican “problem.” A 1947 report by the New York City Association of Assistant Superintendents makes the first explicit mention of the “problem” of educating Puerto Rican students—specifically the language barrier. This report, of limited circulation, professed “to share the professional knowledge and experience which we have accumulated in the hope that a better educational job can be done for the boys and girls who come into our schools from Puerto Rico” (Board Education 1947: 4–6). In 1943, due to the negligible number of students, there was no reference to a “Puerto Rican problem” in the schools (Board Education 1947: 3). However, by 1947, the number of enrolled Puerto Rican students had jumped to 13,914 (Board Education 1947: 2). The Puerto Rican “problem” thus became a “problem” of assimilating the increasing number of Puerto Ricans as Spanish speakers into the English-speaking mainstream. The authors of the report connected the language and literacy handicaps of the students to social pathologies, such as malnutrition, poverty, and overcrowding in the home (Board Education 1947: 38). This report represented the first systematic study conducted on Puerto Rican children in New York City schools and marked the beginning of an increased interest on the part of social scientists to examine Puerto Ricans specifically in terms of education (Cordasco 1972).

The following year in 1948, the Welfare Council of New York City, a collective of university social science scholars and city officials, published a report to address the

needs of the growing Puerto Rican population and to assist in the community's assimilation into wider society. This report examined the community's challenges as a whole, including housing, employment, and health issues. In terms of education, the report found that no two schools confronted the influx of Puerto Rican students in the same manner. However, they did find a pattern of student segregation, based on the fact that the children spoke Spanish. This stemmed from a systemic marginalization of Puerto Rican students by teachers who lacked an appreciation for Puerto Rican culture and the island's educational system, resulting in Puerto Rican children being stigmatized as slow learners compared to their European immigrant counterparts. Instead of offering any concrete solutions to addressing the language needs of Puerto Rican students, the Welfare Council committee instead recommended providing vocational classes for older students to prepare them for the workforce (Welfare Council 1948). This reflected a view of newly arrived Puerto Rican youth as constituting a permanent laboring class with little prospect for upward mobility due to their English-language limitations.

Reading the Welfare Council's report, one can see why Puerto Rican officials viewed the New York City school system with suspicion. Puerto Rican scholars from the island, recognizing that migrant children had special needs of which mainland school officials were ignorant, initiated their own investigative efforts to discern what was happening to children who had relocated to New York City. Puerto Rican Governor Luis Muñoz Marín took a particular interest in the schooling experiences of migrants because it reflected on the success of Operation Bootstrap and his personal political future. In 1948, at Muñoz Marín's behest, Juan José Osuna, Dean of the College of Education of the University of Puerto Rico, undertook a massive study on this subject (Osuna 1968 [1948]). He surveyed nineteen elementary, middle, and high schools in New York City with varied percentages of Puerto Rican enrollment, ranging from a low of 4 percent to a high of 90 percent. Osuna classified Puerto Rican children into three groups: the first, children born on the mainland of Puerto Rican parentage; the second, those who had arrived at an early age and had resided in the U.S. for less than five years; and the third, recent arrivals. He concluded that children from the first two categories, whom he differentiated from new migrants, adjusted to learning English at the same rate (Osuna 1968: 308). Of the third group, he wrote, "These recent arrivals, with all the handicaps they bring from the island, plus the conditions under which they are compelled to live in New York, constitute a real educational problem for the schools of New York" (Osuna 1968: 309). While employing a similar discourse of a Puerto Rican "problem," he did not link it to social pathologies but instead referred to the lack of language resources available for Puerto Rican students as the obstacle. Osuna did not blame Puerto Rican students as being culturally deficient or linguistically inferior, but identified specific needs that would improve the quality of their education, such as Spanish-speaking teachers and aides (Osuna 1968: 315). Moreover, Osuna's recommendations to Puerto Rico's Board of Education placed equal responsibility on both the Puerto Rican government and New York City educational officials. His study demonstrates that the Puerto Rican "problem" in New York City schools was a contested concept, one that was trans-residential in scope.

In the same year, New York City's Board of Education, comprised of university-trained educators and civic leaders, published *A Program of Education for Puerto Ricans in New York*. J. Cayce Morrison, who would serve as the head researcher for *The Puerto Rican Study*, described it as "the first effort of the New York City school

system as a whole to deal with the problems confronting the children of Puerto Rican background” (Board of Education 1948: 2). While continuing the supposition that Puerto Rican pupils lacked the ability to learn, this is one of the first reports to offer a concrete solution to the absence of Spanish-speaking personnel in the public school system. This report resulted in the creation of two new professional positions, Substitute Auxiliary Teachers (SATs) and Puerto Rican coordinators, who specifically assisted Puerto Rican students and other Spanish-speaking students. The school district appointed ten SATs and six Puerto Rican coordinators in 1949 and 1950, respectively.³ The hiring of Substitute Auxiliary Teachers marked a new understanding for the need of students to have their native language represented in the schools, as well as the necessity for administrators to adequately communicate with the parents of pupils. SATs became strong advocates for Puerto Rican children in the schools, forcing school officials to acknowledge that Puerto Ricans could be effective professional educators (Sánchez-Korrol 1996).

Certain administrators, whose schools received an influx of Puerto Rican students, came up with innovative ways to address their needs. Mary Finocchiaro, principal of Seward Park High School, strongly believed that foreign-language teachers were a resource schools needed to utilize in order to facilitate the transition of Puerto Rican students into English-language classrooms. Finocchiaro played a key role in the 1950 publication of *English for Spanish Americans*, a manual for teaching English to Spanish speakers (Huebner and Finocchiaro 1950). In 1958, she published “Teaching English as a Second Language in the Elementary and Secondary Schools,” while serving as Chairman of Foreign Languages at Seward Park. Finocchiaro utilized her skills as a teacher of foreign languages to meet the language needs of Puerto Rican students. She emphasized in *English for Spanish Americans* that, “much more is included in the terms *education and adjustment of Puerto Rican children* than the teaching of English” (Huebner and Finocchiaro 1950). Finocchiaro’s underlined text stressed the importance of cultural understanding. She emphasized that foreign-language teachers, due to their intrinsic love of languages, could assist Puerto Ricans in the following areas: one, the development of language competency, and, two, the personal/social adjustment of students by preparing bilingual materials, speaking to parents, teaching school customs (recess, lunch), and learning more about the Puerto Rican school system (Finocchiaro 1958). Finocchiaro believed that foreign-language teachers’ appreciation of other cultures and languages placed them at an advantage to make significant contributions to the effective learning transition of Puerto Rican children. Her innovative suggestion was for schools to hire teachers trained in the Spanish language and subject area, which would allow these students to succeed in New York City public schools. Finocchiaro was not an arm-chair scholar. She utilized her skills and the resources available to her to actively improve the learning conditions faced by Puerto Rican students.

City officials increasingly drew on experienced school administrators to investigate the educational issues facing Puerto Rican children. In 1951, New York City officials published *Puerto Rican Pupils in American Schools*, a report entrusted with hastening the adjustment of Puerto Ricans into the social, political, and economic mainstream. The report was prepared under the supervision of Leonard Covello, principal of Benjamin Franklin High School. Covello drew on his own experience as an Italian immigrant in New York City public schools to encourage understanding of the value of language in a child’s identity. Having seen the detrimental effects of forced assimilation tactics on his own classmates, he warned administrators against

regressing to these tactics. He therefore stressed language maintenance, support of native culture, and community involvement by the schools (Mayor's Advisory Committee on Puerto Rican Affairs in New York City 1951: 14–20). Covello, like Finocchiaro, strongly argued for an increase in the number of Spanish-speaking teachers in the classroom. “If we accept as our basic goal the child’s adjustment to his new environment,” Covello wrote, “it is important that he communicate in Spanish until he is able to express himself somewhat adequately in English” (Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Puerto Rican Affairs in New York City 1951: 12). By making children feel comfortable in his or her home language and culture, the school environment would become more welcoming, allowing students to flourish. Building on the work of Finocchiaro, Covello’s report reveals a continued evolution in discussions regarding Puerto Rican educational issues by focusing on the shortcomings of the schools rather than on those of the students. Covello and Finocchiaro held sympathetic views regarding Puerto Ricans and the importance of bilingualism. While other appraisals of Covello have pointed to his life as an Italian immigrant who experienced forced Americanization as a cause for his sympathetic approach (Peebles 1978; Perrone 1998; Johaneck 2007), one need only read his memoir *Heart as a Teacher* (Covello 1958) to learn that he had the best intentions as an educator and promoted cultural awareness on behalf of all his students. Finocchiaro’s shared sensitivity came from her personal and professional interests in languages and culture.

The use of “Puerto Rican problem” as a term appears frequently in Covello’s report (Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Puerto Rican Affairs in New York City 1951: 35–6). For example, with Puerto Ricans making up close to 26 percent of the New York City school population, Covello associated the insufficient number of Spanish-speaking teachers and special-need classes as “the problem of the Puerto Rican pupils” (Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Puerto Rican Affairs in New York City 1951: 25). The “Puerto Rican problem,” however, was not a static term. Like Osuna in his 1948 report, Covello employed the discourse of a Puerto Rican “problem” not in a culturally demeaning sense, but to advocate for policy change. Given Covello’s and the committee’s interest in assessing the adjustment of Puerto Ricans in New York City, they understood the Puerto Rican “problem” as the Puerto Rican *adjustment* problem, which effectively translated to a concern over their presumed inability to assimilate into American society. In the case of Puerto Rican children, Covello’s report would

“ An awareness of the bilingual environment in Puerto Rican communities would become essential to understanding the educational needs of Puerto Rican student in New York City schools. ”

focus on language abilities and the transition to English. It specifically recommended the use of Spanish translators in the schools, the translation of materials sent to parents, and respect of the home culture by teachers and administrators.

An influx of research monies in 1953 allowed researchers to further probe the schooling experience of Puerto Rican children in New York City. Leonard Covello issued a second report that placed an emphasis on curriculum, community relations, guidance, and the need for schools to work with Puerto Rico and the Migration

Division of the Puerto Rican Department of Labor (Covello 1953). In addition to Covello's efforts, the Division of Curriculum Development argued for the development of an educational program that integrated Spanish and Puerto Rican culture into the instruction of Puerto Rican children (Board of Education 1953).

In 1954, Elena Padilla, a cultural anthropologist at Columbia University, published research on the adjustment patterns in a New York Puerto Rican neighborhood. Padilla richly detailed family structure, kinship networks, work, and the daily life of Puerto Rican migrants. This work, aimed at the general public, portrayed Puerto Ricans as self-isolating and trapped with feelings of despair because of their impoverished conditions.⁴ Of particular interest to educators was her description of the bilingual life that surrounded Puerto Rican children as they learned to linguistically engage in both Spanish and English, out of necessity, and not because of limitations in either language. She wrote: "Many languages are spoken in Eastville...Eastvillers are generally to some degree bilingual...Puerto Rican children growing up here are the most distinctive among these nowadays" (Padilla 1954: 9). An awareness of the bilingual environment in Puerto Rican communities would become essential to understanding the educational needs of Puerto Rican students in New York City schools (Nieto 2000). Padilla's findings were not largely read or consulted during this pivotal era, since her work did not perpetuate the dominant discourse of racism that sold books. Unlike that of the later works of Oscar Lewis, and Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, her audience remained small. However, a careful reading of her work reveals that the bilingual environment that Padilla documents would have provided a necessary reality check to policymakers in the mid-1950s.⁵

The Puerto Rican Study

In February 1953, the Board of Superintendents of New York City approached the Ford Foundation to fund a study on the "problem" of Puerto Rican students in New York City public schools. Stating that the Board of Education lacked the money to find a solution or to create a course of action, the Board of Superintendents requested that the Ford Foundation provide a grant that would provide for an extended research project of Puerto Rican pupils. Six months later, they received \$160,000 to initiate an exploratory study. The grant would be continuously renewed for the next three years, allowing the authors of *The Puerto Rican Study* to conduct an extensive research project and provide concrete results.

J. Cayce Morrison served as head of a diverse team of educators, Puerto Rican government officials, and social scientists who collaborated to produce *The Puerto Rican Study*. Morrison had served as former Assistant Commissioner and Coordinator of Research for the New York State Education Department. The *Study*'s diverse members appealed to the Ford Foundation's interest in studying demographic transitions in urban areas. At the time of his appointment, Morrison was lauded for his accomplishments in educational research, having completed a number of studies for the New York City public schools and created various curriculum resources.⁶ Morrison's interest in researching diverse schooling experiences were matched with his commitment to produce educational materials for the classroom.

Morrison headed an intellectually driven team of teachers and community representatives to conduct *The Puerto Rican Study*. They represented Teachers College, Columbia University, New York University, the University of New Mexico, and Fordham University. The project also included representatives of the Puerto Rican government and the New York City community, including Mary Finocchiaro,



First Lady Inés Mendoza de Muñoz Marín (a former teacher herself) chats with a Puerto Rican student during one of her numerous visits to New York City schools (circa 1950s). Photographer Luis R. Díaz. The Office of Information for Puerto Rico. Archives of the Puerto Rican Diaspora, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College, CUNY. Reprinted, by permission, from Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños.

Coordinator of Puerto Rican Programs for Junior High Schools (New York City); Joseph Monserrat, Director of New York City's Migration Division Office; Pauline M. Rojas, Director of the Education Section of Puerto Rico's Department of Education; and Clarence Senior, Chief Director of the Migration Division Office for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Also included were representatives of New York City's Board of Education and New York State's Department of Education, including Chester A. Pugsley, Jacob Theobald, and William E. Young.

The Puerto Rican Study focused first and foremost on the educational adjustment of Puerto Rican students in New York City public schools. Morrison described the *Study's* goals as twofold. In a micro sense: "it was a major effort of the school authorities to establish on a sound basis a citywide program for the continuing improvement of the educational opportunities of all non-English-speaking pupils in the public schools." On the macro level, "the findings might be useful to all schools, public and private, that are trying to serve children from a Spanish-language culture" (Morrison 1958). As the *Study* developed, researchers consulted with educators from the Southwest. They began to see their work as potentially impacting pupils in and outside of New York who needed to learn English as a second language.

Throughout California and the Southwest, Mexican and Mexican-American children faced discrimination on the basis of both language and race. The families in these communities were largely treated as second-class citizens. Pupils encountered inferior educational facilities and corporal punishment. Their language needs were largely ignored and students were left to "sink or swim." With a significant and politically mobilized middle class, many Mexican-American communities had begun to take strides by the mid-twentieth century throughout California and the

Southwest. Their efforts were two-fold in the quest for equal education. They demanded language rights, challenging English-only laws. In addition, they fought legalized racial segregation (San Miguel 1987, 2001). With the success in 1946 of *Méndez v. Westminster*, which declared the segregation of Mexican-American pupils in California unconstitutional, Mexican-Americans in California now had a legal precedent to achieve educational equality (see the essay by McCormick and Ayala in this issue). Their battles, like that of Puerto Ricans in New York, would be extensive and intricately tied to the community's economic status, residential segregation, and minority status (Ruiz 2004).

Researchers conducted *The Puerto Rican Study* in three major phases. The initial exploratory phase, took place from October 1953 to September 1954. This phase sought to catalog the theories and practices that characterized the education of Puerto Rican children. The gathering of this information occurred at eleven schools through teacher interviews and classroom observations. Confusion abounded in the categorization of Puerto Rican children by public school administrators. This incomprehension resulted from the lack of systematic data on Puerto Rican students. Absence of birth and school records compounded by cultural barriers led to misunderstandings on grade placement and educational needs.

In the 1954 spring term, researchers problematized the assumption of Puerto Rican students' homogeneity by measuring the social-cultural adjustment of Puerto Rican pupils through a social educational survey conducted on fourth to ninth graders. A 1954 survey revealed five groups within the Puerto Rican student population: island-born, island-schooled; island-born, exclusively mainland-schooled; mainland-born pupils of Puerto Rican parentage; mainland-born pupils of non-Puerto Rican parentage; and foreign-born pupils (Morrison 1958: 106). Of special attention is the distinction researchers made between immigrants and Puerto Rican migrants. Rather than collapsing them into one indecipherable group with language barriers, these researchers made a sharp and important division based on citizenship. Participating schools had expressed confusion over how to categorize Puerto Ricans since, due to their citizenship, traditional modes of categorization were not applicable. As Carmen Whalen has argued, the patriotic dimensions of citizenship in the World War II and post-war era encouraged the inclusion of Puerto Ricans (Whalen 2000). At this juncture, they were still seen as ethnics with the potential to assimilate into the mainstream. Puerto Rican citizenship, while culturally ambiguous, was preferable to foreigners who carried presumed loyalties to other governments.

Researchers found that Puerto Ricans were willing and interested in learning English. This investigation of the Puerto Rican student population yielded that over 50 percent of the students were first or second generation, and that about half of them had attended schools in Puerto Rico before coming to New York City (Morrison 1958: 107). Differentiating between the community of mainland- versus island-born children became important for researchers as it revealed variations in home language use indicating different language needs. Time in the U.S. impacted the home language. This is evidenced by Spanish being the only language spoken in the majority (74 percent) of island-born, island-schooled pupils' homes. The number decreased to 58 percent for the island-born, exclusively mainland-schooled pupils' homes. An even more dramatic difference of Spanish-language use could be found in the homes of mainland-born children. Here only 21 percent were living in Spanish-only-speaking homes. This point is

important because it reveals how Puerto Ricans are depicted as a group that would assimilate like other immigrant groups had previously.

As Bonnie Urciuoli discusses in *Exposing Prejudice: Puerto Rican Experiences of Language, Race, and Class*: “The ordinary bilingual speech that people engage in every day is always subject to racialization” (1996: 35). It is what comes next by those in power that allows for the labeling of students as “good ethnics” with the potential to assimilate linguistically and thus worthy of receiving a good education. The *Study* captures a key moment because Puerto Ricans were still seen as a group that only needed the proper Americanization tools to become American. They had not been racialized yet and were not “beyond the melting pot.” The majority of homes for mainland-born children (63 percent) used a combination of English and Spanish during the period covered by the 1958 report. Interestingly, English was spoken to some extent in the homes of at least 70 percent of the mainland-born pupils of Puerto Rican parentage (Morrison 1958: 110). This demonstrates the ability and desire of Puerto Ricans to learn English. These findings demonstrate how Puerto Ricans sought economic stability and social inclusion—not social isolation or welfare, as other problematic works concluded.

For Puerto Ricans, the pursuit of the American Dream did not necessitate cultural assimilation. Puerto Ricans have historically resisted trading their language and culture for English language monolingualism (Nieto 2000). Juan Flores has demonstrated how the New York Puerto Rican community has moved towards the cultural fusion of both Spanish and English since their mass arrival (Flores 1993). During the 1950s, however, the concern for parents and advocates of Puerto Rican children became linguistic maintenance. As the community experienced circular migration and family reunification, continuity of the Spanish-language became a necessity. A greater appreciation of the value placed on the Spanish language by the Puerto Rican community would allow educators to begin utilizing children’s diverse language experience as an asset rather than an obstacle.

Researchers for *The Puerto Rican Study* surveyed teaching practices in the spring of 1954. Interviewing and conducting classroom observation, researchers found an absence of a general methodology for teaching English. Henceforth, the *Study* team sought to create a level of uniformity in linguistic methodology and its application in the classroom (Morrison 1958: 18–25).

Between October 1954 and September 1956, *The Puerto Rican Study* entered the second phase of developing curriculum materials, including resource guides, teaching aides, and testing materials. The *Study* authors wanted these materials to relate to New York City courses of instruction and to serve both native and non-native English speakers. In other words, they did not separate the problem of teaching Spanish-speaking children. Rather, they saw *The Puerto Rican Study* as an opportunity to improve the overall scholastic, social, and cultural quality of city schools. They organized the materials in a manner that allowed for successful use in classes comprised of English-speaking and non-English speaking pupils or in classes comprised wholly of non-English Speaking pupils (Morrison 1958: 45). While comprehensive bilingual and/or English as a Second Language programs were lacking in the schools, researchers were cognizant that Puerto Rican students needed language transition classes, as well as content classes.

This marked the first attempt to create uniform materials like syllabi and teaching aides to assist teachers in the classroom. In subsequent years,

the development of these language-appropriate materials became a major accomplishment of *The Puerto Rican Study*. By acknowledging and providing these bilingual materials, the schooling for students with limited English proficiency improved. Pupils in New York City were traditionally confronted with a “sink-or-swim” approach, unless individual schools had committed themselves to a different philosophy. These researchers analyzed the various methods of teaching English as a Second Language, resulting in the development of materials for schoolteachers. The resulting materials were cataloged as the “Resource Unit Series” and the “Language Guide Series.” The language guides emphasized the acquisition of English listening and speaking for elementary, intermediate, and junior high school levels. The resources units complemented existing curricula at the time.

In 1955, researchers visited San Juan, Puerto Rico, with the intent to obtain greater knowledge of island culture and language needs. They returned with recommendations of smaller classes, orientation classes, and teacher training for Puerto Rican college students to assist in the adjustment of Puerto Rican pupils to mainstream schools.

Our schools sometimes overwhelm these children with their size, bustle, and rules of behavior different from those in Puerto Rico. These children are unaccustomed to New York City teachers’ methods of conducting classes, to group work, and to participation in social activities with children of other backgrounds. They find that other children live in families with different traditions and customs. ... All of these factors introduce unusual stresses and strains in the lives of these migrant children (Puerto Rican Workshop 1957).

Visiting San Juan allowed researchers to understand the emotional and mental challenges migrant children faced in New York City. They wanted the school system to become more accommodating in meeting the needs of students through these specific recommendations. For teachers, this meant a renegotiation of traditional immigrant understandings of returning home. Researchers learned that the community’s unique characteristic of circular migration meant that much of the migrant population planned to return to Puerto Rico. Unlike prior immigrant waves, ease of transport and citizenship status ensured this as a realistic, viable act. The possibility of return to the island thus impacted the community’s need for Spanish language maintenance, as well as the linguistic expectations Puerto Rican parents’ held for their children. Researchers learned from the parents of the high school students involved in the study that:

They would like to have their children keep up their Spanish while in New York City. This need is voiced at the elementary school level. It should be explored further. There might be the possibility of establishing such classes in selected centers. Knowing that such centers existed, Spanish language families wanting such instruction could establish their residence in districts providing such instruction (Morrison 1958: 100).

This awareness compelled researchers to rethink the linguistic immigrant model. Unlike the three-generation pattern renowned linguist Joshua Fishman proposed, Puerto Ricans were not actively seeking to curtail language practices or have it diminish by the third generation (Fishman 1971). Researchers encouraged teachers to develop materials in keeping with this different model.

The third phase of *The Puerto Rican Study* took place between October 1956 and August 1957, and focused on implementation of the research results. The *Study* team distributed their findings and materials to teachers. Training seminars were organized for teachers and aides on how to implement these new materials in their classroom. The final report on the 1955 Puerto Rican workshop was also submitted. This phase culminated with a bureaucratic transition as the researchers “handed over” their findings and resources. Henceforth, the Bureau of Curriculum Research would publish the *Study*’s resources.

Challenging characterizations of Puerto Rican youth, family, and gender roles

In this section, I focus on the social history of *The Puerto Rican Study*. Moving beyond its accomplishments of curriculum guides and language models, I am looking at the larger implications of the *Study*. The contact researchers had with Puerto Rican parents and administrators who worked with Puerto Rican children allowed for a greater, more realistic understanding of Puerto Ricans. Not only would the researchers document their increasing cultural awareness, their documentation demonstrates a greater appreciation of Puerto Ricans and debunked stereotypes. Their willingness to learn more about the community allowed for spaces to be created that permitted Puerto Rican parental participation in the schools, which parents took full advantage of.

Newspapers and magazines in reporting the Great Migration had sensationalized the perceived danger and delinquency of Puerto Rican youth since their postwar mass arrival.⁷ The issue of delinquency with regards to the negative characterization of Puerto Rican youth became of great importance to the researchers. They would devote an entire chapter to the topic in the final published study and in multiple issues of their internal newsletter, “The Puerto Rican News Exchange.” This newsletter circulated among the research team, participating schools, teachers, and administrators. The entire December 1954 issue of “The Puerto Rican Study News Exchange” discussed juvenile delinquency. The findings they presented challenged the negative characterization of Puerto Rican children as prone to crime and wrongdoing. Within the school network, *The Puerto Rican Study* discussed positive images of Puerto Rican youth. Several of these positive images can be found in anecdotes from “The Puerto Rican News Exchange.” This is telling in that school administrators and teachers were the ones who had actual day-to-day contact with Puerto Rican youngsters. The prominent headline in the December 1954 issue read, “Four principals say ‘NO!’” referring to the perceived delinquency of Puerto Rican students. Among these, Jack August, the principal of P.S. 108, a school in Spanish Harlem with the highest percentage of Puerto Rican children in the city boasted: “Our school has had the lowest record of window breakage in the district. We had the highest attendance record in the area, and rank second or third in the Borough of Manhattan” (Board of Education 1954: 2). Principal Morris Finkel of P.S. 22 in Brooklyn concurred with August’s implicit argument that Puerto Rican youth were not naturally troublesome. He stated:

It has been my contention all along that the “delinquency” picture is overdrawn. This is because of ignorance or prejudice or even other motives. I speak only for the elementary schools I know, but I fall on very firm ground that the Puerto Rican children do not present *problems* of pre-delinquent behavior any more than other children similarly situated (Board of Education 1954: 3).

Mr. Finkle’s conceived of delinquency as a class issue not a racial one and specifically, not just a Puerto Rican one.⁸ It was a herculean task on the part of the researchers to challenge this stereotype, considering its dominance in assessments of Puerto Rican youngsters.

Further challenging stereotypes of Puerto Rican youth, the researchers stated that the record of school attendance for the Puerto Rican school population as a whole was comparable to other students. They credited Puerto Rican parents for this accomplishment, recognizing the hurdles the group had overcome, which included geographic unfamiliarity, language barriers, inadequate clothing, and illness due to cold weather (Morrison 1958: 117). Rather than attacking this group, *The Puerto Rican Study* presented evidence of the efforts made by pupils in light of the many adversities they confronted. By investigating different causal explanations, they looked beyond the child-rearing habits of Puerto Rican parents and considered the economic day-to-day challenges of raising school children living in poverty. This knowledge allowed them to address the social causes that hindered student progress and encouraged schools to work with different social service agencies.

The group’s newsletter also boldly challenged the issue of truancy, a component of juvenile delinquency. Researchers encountered school administrators who wanted to prepare their schools for the new wave of migrant children. “Principal Eugene Maleska at P.S. 192 [in Manhattan] reacted with the same mild surprise to our questions and expressed the desire not to talk about Puerto Ricans *as a separate problem*. By this he emphasized the lack of any ‘particular’ deficiency in Puerto Ricans. He did not view them beyond reform” (Board of Education 1954). Again Maleska still perceived Puerto Ricans as capable of “melting into the pot.” These institutions were interested in addressing poverty and Puerto Ricans and approached both issues as problems with viable solutions. In the 1940s and early 1950s, Puerto Ricans were approached as an assimilable group by *The Puerto Rican Study* researchers. Yet, they were largely studied by outsiders who emerged as “the experts” of the New York Puerto Rican working class experience (Briggs 2002: 170). Similar to the Progressives and “uplifters” of the early twentieth century, agencies and social scientists stressed the need for the community to achieve respectability.

Principal Maleska, like Principal Finkel, reported a very low rate of trouble in his school and a high rate of attendance. His primary concern involved children leaving the district—as they often did—without notifying the school. This could largely be explained by the continual migration pattern of Puerto Rican migrants in this period and the difficult housing circumstances the poor and newly arrived face in New York, which has been extensively documented in other works (Covello 1970; Rodriguez 1989; Sánchez-Korrol 1996).

The Puerto Rican Study also investigated the continual criticism the Puerto Rican family confronted as they adjusted to life in New York City. On the issue

of parental neglect, seen as the root of delinquency, researchers provided basic information that validated previous scholars, like Osuna and Covello, who argued for an understanding of the relationship between school experiences in Puerto Rico and issues of preparedness in New York City. Puerto Rican traditional reverence for schoolteachers and administrators initially kept Puerto Rican parents socially distant from the school. They considered the school a sphere of educators and not of parents. Interpreted by outsiders as neglect, *The Puerto Rican Study* sought to clarify the relationship of Puerto Ricans to school administrators. This, in turn, allowed Puerto Rican researchers to document Puerto Rican parent participation that was already taking place in the schools and finalize procedures to further parental involvement.

As part of their study, researchers met with school administrators from Puerto Rico to learn more about island customs and parental behavior. They found that in Puerto Rico, a free lunch was provided by the public school for all children. Thus researchers argued for a greater understanding by administrators for Puerto Rican parents, who assumed that a free lunch was part of the public school service in New York. Obtaining knowledge of these differences in cultural customs allowed researchers to proactively address issues that stymied school administrators. In its final recommendations, *The Puerto Rican Study* encouraged school administrators to “recognize and define the school’s responsibility to assist, counsel, and cooperate with the parents of non-English-speaking pupils in all matters pertaining to the child’s welfare” (Morrison 1958: 241).

The researchers found that Puerto Rican parents were more than willing to engage in service for the well-being of their children. Schools, Morrison argued, had to proactively work with these parents to ensure student success. “Winning the good will and cooperation of Puerto Rican parents is essential to accelerating the learning and social-cultural adjustment of their children. Improving the relationships between the school and the parents of non-English speaking children is part of the two-way process of integrating new arrivals with established ethnic groups” (Morrison 1958: 241). These recommendations resulted from the knowledge they obtained in visiting San Juan and in having educators from Puerto Rico involved in the research process. Along with positive findings on Puerto Rican pupils, these researchers also developed a working relationship with parents and encouraged schools to provide a receptive environment for students, which would include hiring translators and offering evening hours (Morrison 1958: 156–7). *The Puerto Rican Study* researchers found that parents turned to schools as a source of information in their children’s adjustment process. In their final recommendations, they encouraged schools again to capitalize on this opportunity: “Take a new look at the school’s opportunity to accelerate the adjustment of Puerto Rican children and their parents through advice and counsel to parents on problems normally considered to be outside the conventional functions of the school” (Morrison 1958: 242). Schools, unlike newly arrived migrants, would have an easier time locating city services, which, in turn, would be beneficial to the well-being of their student population.

Inside the research team’s internal newsletter are several examples of parent participation. School principal Jack August communicated his own experiences with Puerto Rican parents in the “Puerto Rican Study’s News Exchange.” Entitled: “An East Harlem School Grows into a Community Center,” August described the first meeting in January 1955 as an “unforgettable experience.”



Santos Figueroa, a sixteen-year-old Puerto Rican photography student at the Manhattan High School for Boys (P.S. #622), received a \$375.00 scholarship check from Principal Irving M. Boroff (20 November 1964). At the ceremony Principal Boroff stated, "At a time when the headlines are full of comments on the alleged 'moral decay' of our youth, it is well to pause for a moment to become acquainted with the friendly manner in which The Manhattan High School for Boys puts its unique 'success' philosophy into practice. We are proud of Santos and students like him who permit their teachers to reach them in order to lessen their problems." Photographer Carl Levins Associates. The Office of Information for Puerto Rico. Archives of the Puerto Rican Diaspora, Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College, CUNY. Reprinted, by permission, from Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños.

The school had taken steps to prepare a welcoming environment, playing Spanish music over the speaker system and providing translators for the evening's speakers and teachers. In turn, hundreds of parents came to see the new building and teachers. Meetings throughout the year continued to be well attended. Parents, in response to the openness of the school, volunteered. The bilingual skills of many parents were an invaluable resource. Principal August shared the following incident:

Luck was with us and at our third meeting we became acquainted with a man of dynamic personality who helped us to get the organization started. His name was Pedro Canino. Through his tireless efforts we got to know other parents and other citizens of the community. We also learned from him the things that would attract and keep our parents interested (Board of Education 1955: 5).

Not only were Puerto Rican parents interested in their children's education, administrators recognized that they could learn a great deal from these new arrivals. Canino is only one example of the many Puerto Rican parents that actively participated in the educational experience of their children.

Pedro Canino's participation in a traditionally female and/or "privileged" space promotes a closer look into Puerto Rican male involvement in the community. Mr. Canino stands in complete opposition to traditional presentations of Puerto Rican men as political exiles or fleeting, seasonal contributors (Colón 1982; Vega 1984). Puerto Rican men became absentee figures as female-centered pathologies developed (Lewis 1966). Even when researchers have attempted to sympathetically portray Puerto Rican men as victims to socio-economic circumstances, the constructions continue to be that of an absentee male figure. Canino's efforts are characterized as "tireless"—a strong indicator that his efforts were both unexpected and valued. Canino's contributions compel a broader historical understanding of male contributions to the educational improvement of Puerto Rican children at the community-school level.⁹

Another example of Puerto Rican parents working with schools to help their community came from P.S. 61 in Manhattan. This school had a strong Parent-Teacher Association that sought to address economic issues that hindered parent participation. Aware that inadequate winter clothing kept many away, the school began to discreetly collect and distribute clothes. They continued to work closely with Puerto Rican parents on larger issues. Chief among them was the language barrier. When bilingual advisors reported that parents were hesitant to come to schools because of their limited English language skills, Substitute Auxiliary Teachers set up language classes that were characterized as:

More like afternoon clubs, these sessions were as often filled with heated discussions of common problems and events in daily life, which were carried on in a mixture of languages. Bilingual parents handled the teaching (Board of Education 1955: 8).

This evidence strongly contradicts arguments of Puerto Ricans' unwillingness to improve themselves. In the midst of the everyday challenges of economic hardship and linguistic and cultural unfamiliarity they faced as working migrants, Puerto Ricans sought not only to improve the education of their children but also their own. The engagement by Puerto Rican parents in a sphere that routinely marginalized them speaks to their courage to leave the comfort zone and seek integration in an institution that promised to better the lives of their children. Often portrayed as disinterested and disengaged, scholars like Virginia Sánchez-Korrol (1996), Clara Rodríguez (1991), Antonia Pantoja (2002), and Gabriel Haslip-Viera, Angelo Falcón,

and Félix Matos Rodríguez (2004), to name a few, have documented the ways Puerto Ricans have organized themselves. Everyday forms of participation in spheres of power point to the numerous ways Puerto Ricans have been active in New York City institutions since their arrival, despite unequal power relations.

With a lengthy set of recommendations, *The Puerto Rican Study* viewed itself, “not as something finished, but as the first stage of a larger, city-wide, ever improving program for the education and assimilation of non-English-speaking children.” The study had the interests of all non-English speaking children in mind as it pressed administrators to develop a coherent pedagogical philosophy to recognize the heterogeneity of the non-English-speaking children in New York City schools.

Legacy of *The Puerto Rican Study*

Angela Jorge in her 1983 dissertation, “*The Puerto Rican Study 1953–1957: Its Character and Impact on Puerto Ricans in New York City*,” is highly critical of Morrison and his research team for not advocating more strongly on behalf of Puerto Rican students. Her focus on educational policy-making correctly critiques Morrison for his ineffectiveness to implement the recommendations of the *Study*. She proceeds then to dismiss *The Puerto Rican Study*, overlooking many of the contributions it did make. Focusing on his failure to promote first language maintenance, Jorge finds fault with many of the changes Morrison proposed. Jorge is critical of Morrison’s willingness to work with existing curriculum, which she finds deficient. She specifically advocates that the curriculum be adapted to reflect the academic needs and cultural reality of the student population. Here I do not stand alone in recognizing that the curriculum materials of *The Puerto Rican Study* stands as one of its few achievements. Sonia Nieto makes note not only of this achievement but also of its upgrading of teaching English as a Second Language, which would lead to an increase of Puerto Ricans on a professional level in the schools (Nieto 2000: 14). Written in 1983, Jorge is informed by the developing wealth of multicultural curriculum and pedagogy. Her critiques are valuable and provide a necessary re-reading of *The Puerto Rican Study*. Her strongest criticisms regarding Morrison’s failure to implement the program, however, fail to take into account the changing political landscape of the time. The shift in the New York City School Board’s attention toward desegregation, following the historic 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, might have made the implementation of the *Study*’s recommendations an impossibility.

Prior to the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which obligated administrators to consider *de facto* segregation, New York City school administrators took for granted the ethnic homogeneity of neighborhood schools and assumed their pupils’ need for linguistic assimilation. This assumption, as well as the Progressives’ Americanization agenda of the early twentieth century, resulted in an absence of a coherent linguistic methodology for the diverse school population in a city of immigrants (Ravitch 2000: 244). The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision spurred the New York City Board of Education to reprioritize its goals and overshadowed the work and recommendations of *The Puerto Rican Study*. In a statement issued the day after this historic Supreme Court decision, the Board of Education committed itself to observing the ruling.

Indeed, the ruling made the proposals of *The Puerto Rican Study* irrelevant to the Board of Education. Beginning in the mid-1950s, the Board of Education focused on the black-white conception of segregation in New York City. Federal funding

depended on the school district demonstrating efforts to achieve a fifty-fifty black-white ratio in the classroom (López 2004). This focus redirected funds and energy into a number of unsuccessful efforts to desegregate schools.

Despite the changing pedagogical environment, *The Puerto Rican Study's* organization, methods, and goals challenged negative characterizations of Puerto Rican students. An analysis of how researchers approached the areas of language, culture, and community, demonstrates that they viewed Puerto Ricans with a different scope of understanding. These researchers shifted the end goal from linguistic assimilation to an advocacy for linguistic pluralism and bilingualism. They accepted bilingual education as more than a tool for improving language skills. It should serve, they argued, as a starting point for holistic learning and improvement of the entire scholastic curriculum (1958: 15). This would help set the stage for future researchers, advocates, and reformers of bilingual education.

Conclusion

The Puerto Rican Study provided tangible documentation that dispelled negative social scientific notions of Puerto Rican children and parents. This evidence, which came directly from the schools themselves, contradicted earlier social scientific findings that criticized the community's ability to learn and progress in New York City. Fifteen years after *The Puerto Rican Study's* publication, Francesco Cordasco, author of many educational articles concerning Puerto Rican children, acknowledged the *Study's* accomplishments (Cordasco 1978). All of his identifications were pragmatic, including the development of teaching guides, tests, and curriculum bulletins. Cordasco believed that the educational-ethnic-social surveys provided a profile of the Puerto Rican students and data regarding Puerto Rican performance in relation to their peers. Taking into account parental concerns offered administrators "revealing information concerning the problems of Puerto Rican children in achieving cultural-educational-social adjustment in New York City schools" (Cordasco 1978: 359).

The Puerto Rican Study is noteworthy for its effort to change perceptions of Puerto Rican children. By casting language obstacles as hurdles capable of being overcome versus as deficiencies, it offered concrete solutions. More importantly, by integrating parent participation and positive perspectives of Puerto Ricans, the researchers interrupted the string of negative assessments against these migrants. They challenged representations of Puerto Ricans as meek, absent, delinquent, and neglectful. Instead they presented a people impoverished not of aspirations but of opportunity and understanding. The 1958 publication of *The Puerto Rican Study* represents the most holistic effort to understand the educational experience of Puerto Ricans on the mainland and it speaks to the educational experience of every language-minority child in American public schools. These researchers moved away from locating the problem with the Puerto Rican child, a major feat considering other social scientists continued to publish reports of this nature in the same time period (Handlin 1959).

The culture of poverty thesis cannot continue to be seen as the barometer by which all discourse on Puerto Ricans is measured. Just as it should not continue to be applied to Puerto Ricans in the present-day, it cannot be applied to studies predating the works of Lewis and Glazer and Moynihan. This essay is not meant to be a hagiographical homage to *The Puerto Rican Study*. Rather I use it to encourage closer critiques of works that demonstrate the agency of Puerto Ricans in the improvement of themselves and the lives of their children. In examining the reason why such a significant, well-funded study with concrete utilitarian value would be

shelved, the sad reality is that at the time of its publication, educational interests had shifted to address race issues, and educational pedagogy became secondary. The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision ordering the desegregation of schools obligated this transition.

The Puerto Rican Study demonstrates that the culture of poverty thesis and its methodological antecedents did not hold a hegemonic grasp on social scientific studies of Puerto Rican communities. The *Study* represents a unique example of educators and policymakers employing the tools of social science discourse to examine the educational challenges Puerto Rican children and their families faced in a manner that respected their culture and life circumstances. The Puerto Rican “problem,” in the context of public education, was not insurmountable, as attested by the curriculum materials produced by *The Puerto Rican Study*. Taking this report seriously, as well as the social and political conditions that led to its production, forces us to reevaluate existing views on the relationship between social scientists and ethnic and racial communities by encouraging historically grounded interpretations of how they were studied, while rejecting the ahistorical timelessness of the culture of poverty thesis.



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NOTES

¹ Bourgois' work received the Margaret Mead Award by the American Anthropological Association in 1997 and the C. Wright Mills Award in by the Society for the Study of Social Problems in 1996.

² See Board of Education (1947, 1949).

³ The principal duties of the Substitute Auxiliary Teachers included working with the administrative and instructional staff in elementary schools whose registers had become increasingly Puerto Rican. The Puerto Rican coordinators were assigned to teach English at the junior high school level.

⁴ However, a close reading of the text does provide details on the diverse character of the Puerto Rican community, including differences of race and length of time in New York City. Her discussion of the racial heterogeneity of the community is poignant in an era dealing with the challenges of integration.

⁵ I would like to thank Dr. Bonnie Urciuoli of Hamilton College for her insight in critiquing Elena Padilla's work and ethnographic works on Puerto Ricans overall. Any shortcomings are my own.

⁶ Beginning in 1931, Morrison published a number of studies on New York City public schools, including an analysis on character-building exercises (1931), elementary school activities (1942), and vocational educational programs (1951). In addition, he had conducted research in Ohio and Upstate New York. More importantly, he had created curriculum resources including junior high school spellers (1932) and syllabi for elementary school science classes (1939).

⁷ Examples include: "New York: World They Never Made," *Time*, 12 June 1950; Winifred Rausenbush, "New York and the Puerto Ricans," *Harper's Magazine*, May 1953; Charles Abrams, "How to Remedy our Puerto Rican Problem," *Commentary*, February 1955.

⁸ This itself, however, is problematic. Principal Finkle's response is in line with another popular reading of *West Side Story*, one that interpreted the violence between whites and Puerto Ricans in socio-economic, not racial terms. A further discussion can be found in Sandoval Sánchez (1999).

⁹ I make a distinction since Puerto Rican men have risen in New York's school administrative ranks. Examples are Luis Fuentes and Joseph Monserrat. For more on their achievements, see Lapp (1990) and Torres and Velázquez (1998).

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