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The "Puerto Ricanization" of Florida: Historical Background and Current Status
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The “Puerto Ricanization” of Florida forms part of the growing diversification of the Latino population in the United States, which has prompted new categories of identity among diaspora Puerto Ricans beyond “Nuyorican”—the pejorative sobriquet used on the Island for those born or raised in New York. New hybrid identifications, such as “Florirican,” “Diasporican,” and even “Other-Rican,” point to the significance of local contexts in shaping migrants’ identities.

At the same time, growing differences between Puerto Ricans on the Island and in the diaspora raise emotionally charged issues, such as who can claim to be part of the Puerto Rican nation and how that claim can be legitimated culturally and politically. The Puerto Rican diaspora in Florida, where Cubans have predominated among Latinos for decades, is fertile ground for rethinking cultural identities in the context of increasingly complex interethnic relations. It also provides a unique opportunity to assess the interaction between the socioeconomic profile of recent Puerto Rican immigrants and the communities in which they have settled.

Although we conceived this special issue of CENTRO Journal broadly about Puerto Rican Florida, the articles and creative works featured here all focus on Central Florida. It is there that the dramatic increase in the number of people of Puerto Rican birth or heritage has pointed to a shifting cultural and political terrain, and attracted the attention of journalists, politicians, and academics.

This introductory essay surveys Puerto Rican experiences in Central Florida in the context of the spatial, historical, and demographic trends of Puerto Rican Florida in general. It culls information from archival research, census data, journalistic reports, and oral histories to explain the emergence of the Orlando metropolitan area as the new Puerto Rican “Mecca.”

To begin, we provide an overview of changes in Puerto Rican settlement patterns in the diaspora since the 1960s, including a dramatic reorientation to Florida and concentrating in the areas of the state where most Puerto Ricans have made their homes. Next we sketch a pre-Orlando history of Puerto Rican experiences in Florida that traces population shifts from Tampa Bay to Biscayne Bay as the predominant spaces of Puerto Rican Florida prior to the 1970s. Then we describe the socioeconomic characteristics of Puerto Ricans in Florida based on the 2000 Census and the 2008 American Community Survey. Furthermore, we summarize the main arguments of the individual contributions to this special issue of CENTRO Journal. Finally, we argue that the growing dispersal of the Puerto Rican diaspora away from its traditional destinations in the U.S. Northeast and Midwest toward the Southeast and Southwest has long-term consequences. In particular, Puerto Rican communities in Orlando, Miami, and Tampa differ significantly from each other and from their counterparts in other major U.S. cities, such as New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia, not only in their socioeconomic origins and settlement patterns, but also in their mode of incorporation. As we will elaborate below, Puerto Ricans are writing a new chapter of their diasporic experience in Orlando and other metropolitan areas in Florida.

Changing settlement patterns

Table 1 shows the shifting geographic distribution of Puerto Ricans in the United States over the last five decades. Although Puerto Ricans still concentrate in the state of New York, their proportion decreased from nearly three-fourths of the total in 1960 to slightly more than one-fourth in 2008. For the first time ever, Florida displaced New Jersey as the second largest concentration of stateside Puerto Ricans, nearly doubling the count within a single decade to almost half a million persons. Florida’s Puerto Rican population grew from slightly more than 2 percent of all stateside Puerto Ricans in 1960 to nearly 18 percent in 2008. During this period, Puerto Ricans became the second largest Latino group in the state after Cubans (U.S. Census Bureau 2009).
**TABLE 1:** Distribution of the Puerto Rican Population in the United States, by State, 1960–2008 (Percentages in Parentheses)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>28,108</td>
<td>50,929</td>
<td>93,038</td>
<td>126,417</td>
<td>140,570</td>
<td>172,978</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(3.1)</td>
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<td>(4.6)</td>
<td>(4.6)</td>
<td>(4.1)</td>
<td>(4.1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>15,247</td>
<td>37,603</td>
<td>88,361</td>
<td>146,842</td>
<td>194,433</td>
<td>226,297</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(1.9)</td>
<td>(4.4)</td>
<td>(5.4)</td>
<td>(5.7)</td>
<td>(5.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>19,535</td>
<td>28,166</td>
<td>94,775</td>
<td>247,010</td>
<td>482,027</td>
<td>744,473</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(2.2)</td>
<td>(2.0)</td>
<td>(4.7)</td>
<td>(9.1)</td>
<td>(14.2)</td>
<td>(17.7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>5,217</td>
<td>23,332</td>
<td>76,450</td>
<td>151,193</td>
<td>199,207</td>
<td>232,293</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.6)</td>
<td>(1.6)</td>
<td>(3.8)</td>
<td>(5.5)</td>
<td>(5.8)</td>
<td>(5.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>5,217</td>
<td>23,332</td>
<td>76,450</td>
<td>151,193</td>
<td>199,207</td>
<td>232,293</td>
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<td>(3.8)</td>
<td>(5.5)</td>
<td>(5.8)</td>
<td>(5.5)</td>
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<td>New Jersey</td>
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<td>138,896</td>
<td>243,540</td>
<td>320,133</td>
<td>366,788</td>
<td>401,872</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6.2)</td>
<td>(9.7)</td>
<td>(12.1)</td>
<td>(11.7)</td>
<td>(10.8)</td>
<td>(9.5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>642,622</td>
<td>916,608</td>
<td>986,389</td>
<td>1,086,601</td>
<td>1,050,293</td>
<td>1,088,197</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(72.0)</td>
<td>(64.1)</td>
<td>(49.0)</td>
<td>(39.8)</td>
<td>(30.8)</td>
<td>(25.8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>13,940</td>
<td>20,272</td>
<td>32,442</td>
<td>45,853</td>
<td>66,269</td>
<td>77,285</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(1.6)</td>
<td>(1.4)</td>
<td>(1.6)</td>
<td>(1.7)</td>
<td>(1.9)</td>
<td>(1.8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>21,206</td>
<td>44,263</td>
<td>91,802</td>
<td>148,988</td>
<td>228,557</td>
<td>330,780</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(2.4)</td>
<td>(3.1)</td>
<td>(4.6)</td>
<td>(5.5)</td>
<td>(6.7)</td>
<td>(7.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>6,050</td>
<td>6,333</td>
<td>22,938</td>
<td>42,981</td>
<td>69,504</td>
<td>118,797</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.7)</td>
<td>(0.4)</td>
<td>(1.1)</td>
<td>(1.6)</td>
<td>(2.0)</td>
<td>(2.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other states</td>
<td>49,156</td>
<td>75,517</td>
<td>155,045</td>
<td>265,677</td>
<td>450,669</td>
<td>647,839</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5.5)</td>
<td>(5.3)</td>
<td>(7.7)</td>
<td>(9.7)</td>
<td>(13.2)</td>
<td>(15.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>892,513</td>
<td>1,429,396</td>
<td>2,013,945</td>
<td>2,727,754</td>
<td>3,406,178</td>
<td>4,216,533</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(100.0)</td>
<td>(100.0)</td>
<td>(100.0)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the number of persons of Puerto Rican origin in New York declined in the 1990s. Still, New York has the largest share of Puerto Rican residents in the U.S. mainland. Correspondingly, the proportion of Puerto Ricans has grown elsewhere, notably in Florida. Other states with sizeable increases in their Puerto Rican population included Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Texas. In addition, Puerto Ricans have expanded their migration patterns to nontraditional destinations, especially in the South, such as Georgia, Virginia, and North Carolina. Overall, these figures document the growing dispersal of the Puerto Rican diaspora.

Figure 1 provides a visual reference for the following descriptions of current and historical Puerto Rican settlement patterns in Florida. Current census data suggest three main settlement patterns of Puerto Ricans in Florida. As Table 2 displays, Puerto Ricans cluster in Central Florida, particularly in Orange, Osceola, Polk, and Seminole counties. In 2008, the American Community Survey estimated that 293,873 Puerto Ricans lived in this area. Although Orange had the largest number of Puerto Rican residents in the state, Osceola had the largest percentage. A secondary concentration is located in South Florida, comprising Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties. An estimated 201,054 Puerto Ricans were living there in 2008. A third Puerto Rican cluster is found around the Tampa Bay area, which includes Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco, and Hernando counties, where 122,608 Puerto Ricans resided in 2008. They are the majority of the Latino population in Osceola, as well as the largest group of Latinos in Volusia, Orange, Seminole, Hillsborough, Polk, and Broward.

Census data presented in Table 3 confirm that Orange County was the leading destination of Puerto Rican migrants during the first decade of the twenty-first century. Moreover, five of the ten main destinations for Puerto Rican migration (Orange, Miami-Dade, Broward, Hillsborough, and Osceola) were located in Florida. Between 2001 and 2007, more than 20 percent of all Puerto Ricans relocating from the Island moved to those counties. Thus, the recent Puerto Rican diaspora has been directed primarily toward Central and South Florida.

Table 4 shows that Florida has three of the top ten metropolitan areas in the United States with Puerto Rican populations: Orlando-Kissimmee, Miami-Ft. Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, and Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater. In 2008, Orlando had the second largest number of Puerto Rican residents in the United

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>NUMBER OF PERSONS</th>
<th>AS PERCENT OF PUERTO RICANS IN STATE</th>
<th>AS PERCENT OF LATINOS IN COUNTY</th>
<th>AS PERCENT OF ALL RESIDENTS IN COUNTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>121,929</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami-Dade</td>
<td>88,367</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
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<td>Hillsborough</td>
<td>79,203</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>6.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Broward</td>
<td>72,740</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Osceola</td>
<td>60,967</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palm Beach</td>
<td>39,947</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>17.7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk</td>
<td>28,765</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminole</td>
<td>26,131</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volusia</td>
<td>25,276</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinellas</td>
<td>21,320</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other counties</td>
<td>179,828</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>744,473</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2009).
States, after New York City. Moreover, Puerto Ricans are the largest Latino group in Orlando, Tampa, and Ft. Lauderdale, and the second largest in Miami (after Cubans). In Orlando-Kissimmee, Puerto Ricans surpass the proportion of all residents (10.8 percent) in the New York metropolitan area (6.4 percent).

Geographers have recently identified four major Puerto Rican enclaves within the Orlando metropolitan area (Archer and Bezdecny 2009; Concepción Torres 2008; Sánchez 2009). The main points of residential agglomeration of Puerto Ricans are in the eastern section of the city of Orlando, the south central area of the city, Kissimmee (in Osceola County), and Poinciana (in Polk County). Buena Ventura Lakes in Osceola County, with almost 8,000 Puerto Rican residents in the year 2000, is the largest Puerto Rican neighborhood in Central Florida. The nearby Meadow Woods development in Orange County, with more than 4,000 Puerto Rican residents in that same year, is the second largest (Ramos 2006; Swift 2002). Such geographic concentrations are primarily suburban housing subdivisions with more than 20 percent of Puerto Rican residents. This settlement pattern differs notably from the Northeast, where Puerto Ricans have created mostly urban enclaves near the central cities.3
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Initial concentration in Tampa
When and how did Puerto Ricans begin to move to the “Sunshine State”? Today, many are fond of pointing to La Florida’s Spanish past, and some even claim the Spanish conquistador Juan Ponce de León as “the first Florida Puerto Rican.” While the latter claim may stretch the case, digging into the historical pathways that have brought Puerto Ricans to Florida prior to 1960 requires further investigation. The available data suggest a shift from a nineteenth-century preference for the Tampa Bay area, in particular Hillsborough County, to the Miami area, especially in the 1940s through the 1960s (Vázquez-Hernández 2008).

ALTHOUGH THE TAMPA BAY AREA COUNT INCLUDES SIX COUNTIES, HILLSBOROUGH WAS THE UNQUESTIONABLE CENTER OF THE PUERTO RICAN POPULATION IN FLORIDA UNTIL 1930.

Table 5 indicates the number of people born in Puerto Rico and living in Florida at the time of each federal census from 1900 through 1930. The table includes data on gender, race, and area of residence. Each area of residence includes several counties as follows: Northeast (Duval, Flagler, St. Johns); North Central (Alachua, Bradford, Citrus, Marion); Panhandle (Bay, Escambia, Gadsden, Walton); Central (Brevard, Lake, Orange, Osceola, Polk, Seminole, Sumter, Volusia); Tampa Bay (Desoto, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pinellas, Pasco, Sarasota); Southeast (Broward, Dade, Palm Beach, St. Lucie);

| Table 5: Number of People Born in Puerto Rico and Living in Florida, 1900-1930, by Gender, Race, and Area of Residence |
|---|---|---|---|
| **NUMBER OF PERSONS** | 1900 | 1910 | 1920 |
| **GENDER** | | | 189 a | 203 |
| 12 male | 45 male | 147 male | 148 male |
| 12 female | 33 female | 42 female | 55 female |
| **RACE** | | | 143 white | 174 white |
| 22 white | 72 white | 5 mulatto | 29 black |
| 2 black | | | |
| 1 black | 2 black |
| **AREA OF RESIDENCE** | 18 Tampa Bay | 62 Tampa Bay | 137 Tampa Bay |
| 3 Southwest | 6 Southwest | 16 Northeast |
| 2 Northeast | 4 Southeast | 14 Southeast |
| 1 North Central | 4 Northeast | 8 Southeast |
| 2 Panhandle | 7 Panhandle | 4 Panhandle |
| | 5 Central | 4 Central |
| | 2 North Central | 1 North Central |
| a A family of seven with the last name of Gómez appears twice. All information (birth year, race, and relation) for each of the seven people is identical in the summary lists. But the first time they appear in Tampa’s Ward 6 and were born in Puerto Rico, and the second time they are in Tampa’s Ward 10 and were born in “Porto Rico.” Their given names also change, in some cases reflecting Anglicization. Source: Ancestry.com (2002, 2004, 2006, 2009).
and Southwest (Collier, Lee, Monroe). Although the Tampa Bay area count includes six counties, Hillsborough was the unquestionable center of the Puerto Rican population in Florida until 1930. The census data on the racial breakdown of Puerto Ricans in Florida paint a picture of a largely white population, and the data from 1920 and 1930 point to the predominance of men over women.

Many Puerto Ricans were drawn to the Tampa Bay area as the core of the cigar-making industry in the United States from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth. Among the best-known migrants was the labor leader, feminist, and anarchist Luisa Capetillo, who published the second edition of her book, *Mi opinión: disertación sobre las libertades de la mujer* (1913), in Tampa. Less well known were Pedro and Catalina Casellas, a black Puerto Rican couple who operated tobacco-manufacturing ventures (*chinchorros*) in Ybor City toward the end of the nineteenth century. Several of their descendants still lived in the area by the 1980s. Another case was that of Antonio Malpica, a veteran of the U.S. Navy who also owned a cigar-making workshop in Tampa until his death in 1933 (Vázquez-Hernández 2008).

Oral histories and newspaper articles from later decades suggest that the stream of travelers between Puerto Rico and Florida continued to grow. As part of his inaugural speech as Governor of Puerto Rico on June 30, 1933, Robert Gore proposed to address the Island’s “population problem” and the need for “development” in Florida by bringing Puerto Ricans to the state (*El Mundo* 1933: 1, 8; Hull 1933a: E8). The Archivo General in San Juan has preserved many letters to the governor from Puerto Ricans in both Puerto Rico and in New York, requesting to be sent to Florida or seeking to learn more about work and investment opportunities there.

**“WE ARE TEN GOOD AMERICAN CITIZEN FAMILIES. OUR OCCUPATION IS AGRICULTURE LABORERS. ALL CATHOLICS AND BELONG TO THE WHITE PEOPLE RACE... WE HOPE TO BE THE FIRST TEN FAMILIES ENLIST[ED] TO EMIGRATE TO FLORIDA.”**

A July 5, 1933 letter written in English and signed by ten household heads from Quebradillas read: “We are ten good American citizen families. Our occupation is agriculture laborers. All Catholics and belong to the white people race... We hope to be the first ten families enlist[ed] to emigrate to Florida” (Correspondencia General 1932–47). Letters arrived as well from North Americans who looked either for Puerto Rican laborers to work their land or for invitations to “prominent Puerto Ricans,” whose presence in South Florida could contribute to the “exchange of ideas.”
between Puerto Rico and Florida. These various sources included a Jacksonville farmer looking for workers; a dentist and dental nurse seeking to relocate; a Georgia land settlement agent; a New York-based seller of religious statues; the group of ten families from Quebradillas; and another such group from Sábana Grande.

Gore’s tenure as governor lasted under a year, and although his program may never have taken form as a government-sponsored project, the swift response it received suggests a strong interest. It is most likely that resourceful individuals found ways to proceed on their own. For example, a December 1942 letter to Governor Rexford Guy Tugwell from real estate broker Gustavo Armstrong of Ponce referenced the Island’s “surplus population” and proposed the following:

A couple of months ago I decided that I shall go, somehow, to Florida, Texas and Louisiana to investigate opportunities of buying land over there for the Puertorricans [sic] to settle…. My plans are that good, hard workers and ambitious Puertorricans emigrate with their families to settle in tracts of land that they buy over there and in a progressive system that they send … for other friends and relatives to go and establish themselves too. (Correspondencia General 1932–47)

A flyer related to this proposal was entitled “Proyecto para Investigar Posibilidades de Inversión de Capital Puertorriqueño en Compra de Tierras en Florida, Texas o Louisiana y en donde pudiéramos establecernos con garantías de seguridad” (Project to Investigate Possibilities for Investment of Puerto Rican Capital in Land Purchases in Florida, Texas, or Louisiana and in which we would be able to establish ourselves with guarantees of security) (Correspondencia General 1932–47).

While some Puerto Ricans were planning to invest in Florida land, others were coming to work for Florida landowners. For instance, oral histories point to a Santa Isabel couple who spent several years in the fields near Tampa. Their family members today do not know exactly when they lived there or what their work was, but they remember that Doña Susana (fictional name) sent letters regularly back to the Island. Later the couple returned to Santa Isabel and eventually obtained a parcela (a small parcel of land) in Barrio Jauca. From there, Doña Susana continued writing letters, now to the United States.

**From Tampa to Miami**

Once detailed census forms are available through the 1940s, they will likely show the beginnings of a shift from the Tampa area to Southeast Florida, especially around Miami. Certainly, the articles that appeared in *El Mundo* are predominantly about Miami, as that city increasingly emerged as the linchpin between Latin and North America. The Puerto Rican episode of that story was dominated by prominent investors from the Island’s southern coast, who came to the Miami area in the 1940s to set up sugar and banking interests, with plans to develop the sugar industry on the southern shores of Lake Okeechobee (Duany and Matos-Rodríguez 2006: 12). This and other data from the 1940s suggest an effort, in Miami at least, to carve out an elite Puerto Rican space distinct from working-class communities in the Northeast (*El Mundo* 1947: 26). *El Mundo* reported on several Puerto Rican entrepreneurs who were constructing facilities and were operating new ventures in South Florida, with the help of contracted agricultural engineers, mechanics, electricians, and other employees, but who did not plan to bring workers (jornaleros) from the Island (Santiago Sosa 1945: 1, 15).
By 1947 and 1948, the *Miami Herald* had published articles about the important contributions of Puerto Ricans to the area (*El Mundo* 1947: 26; Ramírez Brau 1948: 5, 10). These reports emerged in part in response to Puerto Rican objections to journalistic representations that set Miami Cubans against New York Puerto Ricans. An Arecibo family, who moved to Miami in 1946 and eventually returned to the Island in 1970, recorded in an oral history during the summer of 2009 that the incentive to go to Florida was the desire to do something different. Everyone was going to New York; they went to Florida.

A 1952 study, conducted during one week in April of that year among those departing Puerto Rico by plane, found 35 headed to Florida in that week alone.
(Oficina del Gobernador 1952). Of these, 25 were listed as unskilled agricultural workers. In 1956, the Puerto Rican Department of Labor (Departamento del Trabajo 1956–61) began to make quarterly reports about air passengers between Puerto Rico and the United States. Between 1957 and 1960, the number of Puerto Rican residents leaving for Florida each year ranged between 12,000 and 15,500. Of those, between 12,000 and 14,000 gave Miami as their destination. In April of 1957, the Miami Herald identified Puerto Ricans as “one of the city’s most important ethnic voting blocs” (Shell-Weiss 2009a: 153).

Florida employers began to import Puerto Rican workers during the spring of 1944 (Hahamovitch 2009: 219). This practice occurred despite discouragement from political and industry leaders in both places who claimed that, as U.S. citizens, disgruntled Puerto Rican workers could not be sent back to the Island. This discouragement may have been mitigated, however, by a new policy to withhold part of a Puerto Rican worker’s pay to be delivered upon return to the Island (Hahamovitch 1997: 178). A U.S. Department of Labor publication (Division of Reports and Analysis 1953) discusses the conditions for approximately 3,000 Puerto Rican farm workers in harvesting and processing in the southeastern coast of Florida in 1953. In 1954, about 6,000 Puerto Ricans were registered with the U.S. Employment Service in Florida (Cindy Hahamovitch, personal communication, July 14, 2009). The cover of an undated brochure targeting U.S. employers (see Figure 2), with direct lines connecting the Island to Miami and New York, gives evidence of industrial recruitment to Florida as well.

Puerto Rico could not and would not accept or fill job orders from areas where racial segregation was legal [in the U.S. South]. Despite constant pressure to do so, particularly from Georgia peach growers and sugar cane growers in Florida,
Puerto Rico maintained these policies until well after segregation laws in the U.S. were repealed. While Puerto Rican agriculture workers cut cane in Florida and picked peaches in Georgia, these workers were not “contract workers” recruited by the Puerto Rico Department of Labor. These workers went “on their own” without the benefit of the contract which they, as free American citizens, were at liberty to do. (Monserrat 1991: 12)

Gina Pérez (2004: 52) chronicles the story of Jorge Colosio, which may well be representative of recruitment scams. Colosio told her that he was promised a factory job in Florida in 1951, but that upon arrival he was sent to the fields. There, he found other Puerto Ricans and U.S. blacks who had been similarly misled. By 1954, the State of Florida’s Industrial Commission ruled that employment agencies could no longer bring Puerto Ricans without a confirmed contract, and that they could no longer run their own camps and food establishments for migrant workers (El Mundo 1954: 6; St. Petersburg Times 1954: 6). Nonetheless, the Island’s Department of Labor reported that between 1957 and 1961 the percentage of passengers who resided in Puerto Rico and left for Florida was consistently higher during the fourth and first quarters (see Figure 3). These quarters coincided with the high months for both tourism and Florida’s harvest season between October and March.

Melanie Shell-Weiss (2009b: 239) writes that in the early 1950s, at least one Florida-based employment agency, Caribe Employment Agency, was placing ads in Puerto Rican newspapers and radio announcements for agricultural and industrial jobs in the state. This campaign included recruiting women to work in the garment industry and men in the fields. Shell-Weiss writes that women workers were sometimes held in hotels by armed guards and used as strike-breakers. In 1953, the Puerto Rican Department of Labor, in conjunction with the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union (ILGWU), took steps to shut down that employment agency.

THE GARMENT INDUSTRY IN FLORIDA WAS ONE PATHWAY THAT BROUGHT PUERTO RICAN WOMEN FROM BOTH PUERTO RICO AND NEW YORK.

Both Florida and Puerto Rico served manufacturers and union organizers alike as testing grounds for a production system in the early stages of globalization during the 1950s (Shell-Weiss 2009b: 227). In Miami, the garment industry quickly grew to be the third-largest employer (Shell-Weiss 2009b: 233). As manufacturers moved from New York to southern states and Puerto Rico in search of ever-cheaper labor and production costs, union organizers responded. The ILGWU, in the person of Robert Gladnick, ran a joint organizing campaign in Florida and Puerto Rico from 1953 to 1966 and helped facilitate job placement for workers who wanted to move (Shell-Weiss 2009b: 240–2).

The garment industry in Florida was one pathway that brought Puerto Rican women from both Puerto Rico and New York. Shell-Weiss (2009a: 153) writes that
many of Miami’s Puerto Rican residents had come “down from the Northeast”
as opposed to directly from the Island and that comparisons between Miami and
Harlem were commonplace. Oral histories indicate that this growing population
included families whose paths had led first from Puerto Rico to New York and later
from New York to Miami.

Some migrant workers also traveled regularly between Florida and the Northeast
of the United States—Florida’s tourist industry needed seasonal hotel workers
(Shell-Weiss 2009a: 153), and farm workers came to Florida after their contracts in
northern states had ended and the Florida season was to begin. After the winter,
they returned to their previous employers up north. This translated excerpt from
a 1956 report by the Puerto Rican Department of Labor explains:

In the past four years it has been noted that this group is increasing and gaining
permanence. To such an extent that the Florida bosses and the representatives of
the Employment Services in the South and the Northeast consider them part of the
migrant labor force that moves every year, according to the agricultural seasons,
from South to North and vice versa. (Pagán de Colón 1956: 34–5)

Thus, despite efforts by some investors and entrepreneurs to maintain
Puerto Rican Florida as a space apart from the worker-dominated Puerto Rican
communities in the North, Puerto Rican Florida increasingly emerged as a cross-
class population. By the mid-1950s, South Florida’s Puerto Rican population
included wealthy land investors, middle-class professionals, garment factory workers,
and migrant farm and hotel workers. Although many Cubans lived in Miami well
before 1959, Puerto Ricans were referenced as “the fastest growing Latin American
group” in the area, even as large numbers of refugees began to arrive from Cuba
following Fidel Castro’s taking power there (Shell-Weiss 2009a: 168).

In Miami and in Florida in general in the 1950s and 1960s, racial segregation into
black and white expanded to include a new category: Puerto Rican. A 1953 article in
El Mundo notes that in South Florida, Puerto Ricans were considered a “third race”
and that segregation created housing and schooling problems. Although local whites
did not want Puerto Ricans in their schools, Puerto Ricans did not wish to attend
schools for blacks (Reynolds 1953: 5). Tensions increased as blacks were relocated
in public housing projects, Puerto Ricans were moved into the newly vacated
residences, and garment factories resisted union activities by pitting members of
these groups against one another (Shell-Weiss 2009a: 149, 166). A 1962 St. Petersburg
Times article uses a touch of sarcasm to describe the efforts in Manatee County
(located in the Tampa Bay area) to fit the multiracial children of Cuban, Mexican,
and Puerto Rican migrant workers into Florida’s segregation scheme.

Their skin tones range from pale white to deep black. And this is what has caused
Manatee’s slight case of “color-blindness”: How do you classify a Mexican boy with
Spanish and Indian blood in his veins? Or a Cuban girl whose family tree includes an
Irishman and a Negro? Or a Puerto Rican who can trace his Caucasian ancestry back
for centuries, but whose skin is darker than many native-born Florida Negroes?

Manatee officials wrestled with this dilemma long and hard. They finally settled
on a formula only slightly less consistent than the skin tonal range of the people they
were trying to administer. (Alexander and Sider 1962: 5)
The article goes on to describe the “Manatee solution,” based on area of residence. Because no Cubans lived in black areas, their children were considered white. Mexican and Puerto Rican children were deemed white or black depending on the places in which they lived.

As this article suggests, race and class conflated in the emergence of Puerto Rican Florida. While some Puerto Ricans with economic and cultural capital either blended or were accepted into white Anglo Florida, many migrant workers in farms, factories, and hotels had different experiences. On the same day that the Miami Herald (April 23, 1957) referred to Puerto Ricans as an important voting bloc, it also described Puerto Ricans as the largest crime threat in the city (cited in Shell-Weiss 2009a: 153 and 2009b: 239). Two days later, El Mundo (1957: 1, 20) claimed that Miami’s “Puerto Rican problem” did not stem from property owners and business people, but from the migrant workers (braceros) who were described as having developed a defensive and suspicious character during their stay in the United States, the proclivity to go into the street armed, and a tendency to keep all “outsiders” at a distance.

Although reports from the Florida State’s Attorney’s office contradicted the perception of Puerto Rican migrant workers as a crime threat, and although many articles from Florida newspapers in the 1950s and 1960s described violence perpetrated against Puerto Ricans rather than by them, public views of Puerto Rican migrant workers as a dangerous new element in the Florida population were widespread. For instance, a 1955 St. Petersburg Times article, with the dateline Tallahassee and citing a former Port Authority official from Dade County, describes unscrupulous labor recruiters who were bringing “knife wielders” from the “city slums in San Juan” to Florida (Times Bureau 1955: 8).

From Miami to Orlando
World War II, the Korean War, and mounting tensions during the 1960s between Cuba and the United States also brought Puerto Rican soldiers to bases in Florida. Oral histories document that many Puerto Ricans enlisted in the U.S. armed forces first arrived in the Orlando area, especially the McCoy Air Base (now Orlando International Airport), during the 1940s and 1950s. In addition, Florida land developers in the 1950s and 1960s targeted military populations at their overseas bases as well as establishing offices in San Juan (Hutnyan 1963: 2-F). These elements combined to lure numerous Puerto Rican veterans to retire in Florida, adding another important dimension to the diverse character of Puerto Rican Florida.

By 1960, Puerto Rican journalist Germán Negroni (1960: 17) depicted Miami’s Puerto Rican population as largely working class and as the Puerto Rican community in the continental United States that had most integrated into daily life. But oral histories still suggest distinct experiences for class- and race-based groups of Puerto Ricans in Miami. Jesús Serrano (fictional name), a former migrant field worker from Aguas Buenas, remembered during a July 2009 interview in Puerto Rico that a tripartite system existed in the labor camps around Delray Beach in the early to mid-1960s. He related that Puerto Rican workers were housed in one camp, blacks in another, and whites in yet another. In contrast, during a July 2009 interview in San Juan, members of a light-skinned family who had resided in Dade County during the 1950s and 1960s as they worked their way into the middle class had no recollection of prejudices against, nor of separate spaces for, Puerto Ricans.

When Serrano returned to Delray Beach for one season in 1970, he found that things had changed dramatically. He related that he was the only Puerto Rican
and that the farm bussed in workers from Miami for the day. He stayed only three weeks. Serrano’s story illustrates the shift in Puerto Rican migration patterns under way by the early 1970s. On the Island, seasonal agricultural labor was no longer a prevalent economic strategy, and Florida’s increasingly diverse immigrant population provided local farms with workers from other places, especially Jamaica, the Bahamas, and Haiti.

Puerto Rican migration to Central Florida began in earnest in the late 1960s, when hundreds of islanders acquired properties near the Orlando area, particularly in the city of Deltona in Volusia County. Many bought land and houses with the intention of retiring in the area. During that period, advertisements in Spanish-language newspapers on the Island began to announce extremely cheap lots in Central Florida. The movement of Puerto Ricans to the area in the late 1960s coincided with widespread media coverage of real estate scams, where out-of-state individuals were sold swampland and other properties unfit for future construction and development.

The opening of Walt Disney’s Florida first theme park in 1971 spurred real estate speculation in the Orlando region, and middle-class residents of the Island saw a lucrative investment opportunity there. According to one journalist, “The first wave of Puerto Ricans to settle here [in the Orlando area] were largely retirees attracted to the quiet, safer lifestyle portrayed in Central Florida at a time when the island, and particularly San Juan, was experiencing a sharp increase in crime” (Lipman 2000). Later, the migrant stream broadened to other Puerto Rican communities in New York, New Jersey, and Illinois. For Puerto Ricans interested in moving to Florida, the Orlando-Kissimmee area became increasingly attractive, as the growing service industry there provided entertainment for some and employment for others. By 1980, the census found that 6,796 persons of Puerto Rican origin were living in Orange County (U.S. Census Bureau 1983).

THE OPENING OF WALT DISNEY’S FLORIDA FIRST THEME PARK IN 1971 SPURRED REAL ESTATE SPECULATION IN THE ORLANDO REGION, AND MIDDLE-CLASS RESIDENTS OF THE ISLAND SAW A LUCRATIVE INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY THERE.

The vast surge in Puerto Rican migration from both the Island and the mainland started in the mid-1980s. By then, small Puerto Rican enclaves had emerged in several counties, particularly Osceola and Orange. It was easier to find temporary housing with established relatives, follow their leads into potential job opportunities,
and visit local stores that sold Puerto Rican food and other products. Local government agencies began to notice the increasing influx of migrants. Real estate advertisements continued to appear in newspapers in Puerto Rico and New York, encouraging the purchase of affordable houses in Central Florida.

Between 1990 and 2000, the city of Orlando experienced the largest increase (142 percent) in the number of Puerto Ricans stateside (Falcón 2004). Today, Orlando is the second-largest metropolitan area for Puerto Ricans in the United States, smaller than New York City but larger than such well-established centers of the diaspora as Philadelphia, Chicago, and Hartford. Puerto Ricans have developed countless cultural and social organizations over the two decades, adding to the ethnic diversity of Central Florida.

Socioeconomic characteristics of Puerto Ricans in Florida since 2000
The existing literature on the socioeconomic background of Puerto Ricans who have recently relocated to Florida provides a mixed portrait of this population. A recent study commissioned by the Puerto Rico Federal Affairs Administration (PRFAA) found that 41 percent of all Puerto Ricans in Central Florida had moved there directly from the Island (Delgado 2002). In addition, journalistic reports and census data suggest that many professionals and managers have relocated from the Island to Miami, Tampa, and Orlando. Thus, Puerto Ricans in Florida have been portrayed as predominantly middle class, college-educated, and suburban (Friedman 2002; Rivera-Batiz and Santiago 1994, 1996).

Some quantitative data support the idea that Florida Puerto Ricans are a highly selective population. The 2000 census found that the median annual income for Puerto Rican families in Central Florida was $33,500. More than half (52.8 percent) of all Puerto Rican workers in the area were white-collar workers such as administrative support and sales personnel. Nearly 15 percent were college graduates (Duany and Matos-Rodríguez 2006). As journalist Robert Friedman (2002) sums it up, “Puerto Ricans who have settled in and around the Orlando area are relatively well-off economically and have a higher educational level and a more thriving business community than earlier generations of Boricuas [Puerto Ricans] who settled mostly in the U.S. Northeast.”

**THE 2000 CENSUS FOUND THAT THE MEDIAN ANNUAL INCOME FOR PUERTO RICAN FAMILIES IN CENTRAL FLORIDA WAS $33,500.**

Studies conducted by the Puerto Rico Planning Board confirm that many people move between the Island and the U.S. mainland for non-economic reasons, such as reuniting with family members and searching for a better quality of life, rather than simply finding a job or improving their salaries. The phrase “quality of life” evokes better working and housing conditions, professional opportunities, public services, and safety. This motivation is particularly salient among Island-born professionals who tend to relocate in Florida, California, and Texas (Junta de Planificación de
Puerto Rico 2000; Olmeda 1998). In the early 1990s, for example, more than 40 percent of all graduates from medical schools in Puerto Rico were living in the United States; 18 percent of these were in Florida (Pascual Amadeo 1994).

Another index of the migrants’ class selectivity is the growing number of Puerto Rican-owned businesses in South and Central Florida. In 2002, Puerto Ricans owned 8,911 businesses in the Miami metropolitan area and 5,009 businesses in the Orlando area, especially in the service industry, transportation, communications, construction, and retail trade. In Orlando, Puerto Rican firms accounted for a larger share (25.4 percent) of all Latino-owned businesses than Cuban firms (23.1 percent) (U.S. Census Bureau 2006). The Puerto Rican Chamber of Commerce of Central Florida, based in Orlando, has more than 300 members (Friedman 2002; Pacheco 2001). This economic boom has attracted numerous Island-based companies to Central Florida, such as the Ana G. Méndez Educational Foundation, Banco Popular de Puerto Rico, Cooperativa de Seguros Múltiples, Empresas Fonalledas, Goya Foods, Martin’s BBQ restaurant, El Nuevo Día, Plaza Gigante, Puerto Rican American Insurance Company (PRAICO), and R & G Crown (Fonseca 2004; Oliver-Méndez 2002).

MOST PUERTO RICAN MIGRANTS TO FLORIDA ARE NOT PART OF A “BRAIN DRAIN,” IF BY THAT TERM ONE MEANS THAT THEY OVER-REPRESENT THE MOST EDUCATED AND PROFESSIONAL SECTORS OF THE POPULATION.

A 2001 survey of the members of PROFESA, the Puerto Rican Professional Association of South Florida, sheds some light on the socioeconomic profile of middle-class migrants to Miami (PROFESA 2001). Two-thirds of the members were relatively young (between 25 and 44 years of age) and a similar proportion was born on the Island. On average, they had lived 19 years in Puerto Rico and 17 in the mainland. They had a high educational level—46 percent had completed postgraduate university degrees. More than half earned more than $80,000 a year. Slightly more than one-fourth were professionals, especially accountants, attorneys, and physicians, and another fourth were executives, managers, and business owners. About a third were married to non-Puerto Ricans, especially North Americans and Cubans. Eighty-four percent of the respondents spoke both Spanish and English at home. Eighty-seven percent traveled more than once a year to the Island. This socioeconomic profile reflects a highly mobile, bilingual, well-educated, and prosperous elite among Puerto Ricans in South Florida.
Most Puerto Rican migrants to Florida are not part of a “brain drain,” if by that term one means that they over-represent the most educated and professional sectors of the population. For instance, many Puerto Rican migrants are low-skilled workers who take service jobs at Orlando’s tourist attractions (Hernández Cruz 2002). In particular, Disney World routinely recruits workers in Puerto Rico. In the late 1990s, Disney offered between $900 and $1,500 bonuses and free airfare to those willing to relocate from the Island to Orlando. Likewise, the company paid a bonus to current workers who helped to identify other potential Puerto Rican workers. Most of the recruits would be employed as fast-food restaurant workers and hotel maids at $6.25 per hour (Blank 1999; Foglesong 2001: 183). In addition, Disney has advertised various culinary positions for food and beverage establishments in multiple cities in Puerto Rico (Dan Stewart, personal communication, December 27, 2004).

Occupational data for Puerto Ricans in Central Florida in 2000 (Duany and Matos-Rodríguez 2006: 18–9) show the largest percentage (23.3) working as operators, fabricators, and laborers. This group was followed by service work (20.7 percent), administrative support (18.9 percent), and sales (13.7 percent). Another 11.4 percent had professional and technical occupations, and 8.8 percent held executive, administrative, and managerial positions. Among those over 25 years of age, 33.5 percent had some college education or an associate degree, but only 10.9 percent had completed their bachelor’s degree. This figure compares unfavorably to 15.5 percent for people over 25 with a bachelor’s degree in the United States as a whole and 14.3 percent for Florida (U.S. Census Bureau 2009).

These occupational and educational data include both Puerto Ricans born on the Island and in the diaspora. The relations between the two groups—that is, islanders and the so-called Nuyoricans—remain an important problem, both in Puerto Rico and abroad (see Kerkhof 2000; Lorenzo-Hernández 1999; Pérez 2004; Ramos-Zayas 2003; Vargas-Ramos 2000). According to media reports, Puerto Rican relocation to Florida has drawn on a large pool of disgruntled residents of the northern “Rust Belt” attracted by better weather, economic opportunities, and lower costs of living in the southern “Sun Belt” of the United States. Journalists have generally depicted second- and third-generation Puerto Ricans from states like New York and Illinois as lower class, less educated, and more likely to speak English than those coming from the Island (Coats 2001; Lipman 2000).

Census figures, however, suggest a different picture (Duany and Matos-Rodríguez 2006: 18–9). Among U.S.-born Puerto Ricans in Central Florida in 2000, 11.1 percent
TABLE 6: Main Socioeconomic Indicators of Puerto Ricans in the U.S., by State, 2008 (in Percentages Unless Otherwise Indicated)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
<th>Median household income ($)</th>
<th>Per capita income ($)</th>
<th>Below poverty level</th>
<th>Bachelor’s degree or more</th>
<th>Managerial and professional occupations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>59,119</td>
<td>24,484</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>29,005</td>
<td>14,787</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>41,892</td>
<td>18,966</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>44,431</td>
<td>18,362</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>22,561</td>
<td>12,694</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>44,857</td>
<td>19,731</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>32,751</td>
<td>17,848</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>30,331</td>
<td>13,727</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>28,669</td>
<td>12,447</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>51,227</td>
<td>24,868</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2009).

TABLE 7: Main Socioeconomic Indicators of Puerto Ricans in Miami, Orlando, and Tampa, 2008 (in Percentages Unless Otherwise Indicated)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
<th>Median household income ($)</th>
<th>Per capita income ($)</th>
<th>Below poverty level</th>
<th>Bachelor’s degree or more</th>
<th>Managerial and professional occupations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miami-Ft. Lauderdale - Pompano Beach</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>46,463</td>
<td>23.391</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>30.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlando-Orange County</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>39,778</td>
<td>16,807</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>37,983</td>
<td>17,123</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2009).
of those over 25 years of age had earned their bachelor’s degrees. For the Island-born, the percentage was 6.0. A larger share of U.S.-born Puerto Ricans in Central Florida (21.1 percent) were working as operators, fabricators, and laborers than among the Island-born (16.1 percent). But a larger proportion of those born in the United States had executive, administrative, and managerial jobs as well (10.2 percent vs. 7.4 percent). Overall, Puerto Ricans born in the United States tend to fare better occupationally and educationally than those born on the Island.

Nonetheless, recent census data confirm the growing contrast between Puerto Ricans in Florida and other states (see Table 6). In 2008, Puerto Ricans in Florida had the fourth lowest unemployment rate (9.3 percent) in the United States, after Texas, New Jersey, and California. Furthermore, Puerto Ricans in Florida had the fourth highest per capita income ($18,966), after Texas, California, and New Jersey. Conversely, Puerto Rican poverty rates were much lower in Florida (17.5 percent) than elsewhere, except for Texas and California. On average, Puerto Ricans are doing better economically in Florida than in their initial states of settlement in the Northeast and the Midwest.

As Table 6 documents, Puerto Ricans in Florida also have higher educational and occupational levels than in most other states. After Texas and California, Puerto Ricans had the third highest educational attainment in Florida, with 17.5 percent having a college degree or more. Moreover, Puerto Ricans in Florida had a relatively high percentage (26.8 percent) of managerial and professional workers, especially when compared to states like Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and Ohio.

Despite the stronger socioeconomic standing of Puerto Ricans in Florida relative to other parts of the U.S. mainland, several indicators suggest that they still lag behind other ethnic and racial groups. In 2008, the per capita income for all residents of Florida was $26,694, compared to $18,966 for Puerto Ricans. Among non-Hispanic whites, the corresponding figure was $29,399 (U.S. Census Bureau 2009). That same year, one out of six Puerto Ricans in Florida was living under the poverty level (Table 6). The causes of this persistent economic disadvantage merit further attention.

A SMALLER PROPORTION OF FLORIDA PUERTO RICANS THAN IN MOST OTHER STATES SAID THEY WERE BLACK (4.1 PERCENT), SOME OTHER RACE (22.7 PERCENT), OR TWO OR MORE RACES (5.4 PERCENT).

Another important point to take into account is the growing differentiation among Puerto Ricans in various metropolitan areas in Florida, such as Orlando, Miami, and Tampa. Table 7 shows that Miami’s Puerto Ricans tend to be more privileged in economic, occupational, and educational terms than those who live in
Orlando or Tampa. This pattern may reflect a more middle-class migration stream to South Florida than to Central Florida. The reasons for this socioeconomic selectivity also require more study.

An intriguing question regarding Puerto Ricans in Florida is their racial composition. In the 2000 census, more than two-thirds (67.1 percent) of Puerto Ricans in Florida classified themselves as white, the highest proportion of all states (Inter-University Program for Latino Research 2009). Inversely, a smaller proportion of Florida Puerto Ricans than in most other states said they were black (4.1 percent), some other race (22.7 percent), or two or more races (5.4 percent). These data, combined with the racial profile from the early twentieth century cited before and the legacy of racial segregation in the South, suggest that more research on the racial perceptions of Florida Puerto Ricans is needed.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE VOLUME
This issue of CENTRO Journal samples current scholarship on the Puerto Rican experience in Florida. As guest editors, we sought manuscripts on the social, economic, cultural, and political situation of Puerto Rican migrants and their descendants. We have included contributions by anthropologists, sociologists, educational scholars, historians, and a political scientist. Our collection dwells on Puerto Ricans’ incorporation into the labor and housing markets, health status, and educational challenges in Central Florida. We also feature a reflective essay and an annotated bibliography on Puerto Rican communities in Florida. Together, the studies included here point to the need for further research on a diverse population, especially in terms of class, race, and family migration history, in Puerto Rican Florida.

Identities in a new frontier
In a provocative essay, Luis Martínez-Fernández draws on his personal experiences as a “participant observer” of the Puerto Ricanization of Central Florida. As a historian, Martínez-Fernández seeks to unravel the causes and consequences of the massive movement of Puerto Ricans to the Orlando metropolitan area since the 1980s. He argues that Orlando has become an open social and economic frontier that attracts many upwardly mobile Puerto Ricans and other Latinos. As one of the world’s leading tourist destinations, Orlando offers numerous opportunities for socioeconomic advancement for well-educated and professional migrants. Although Puerto Ricans’ political empowerment in the area has been relatively modest, it will soon follow suit with increasing geographic concentration in certain electoral districts. Martínez-Fernández rightly insists that Orlando differs greatly from other places where Puerto Ricans have settled in large numbers. Many of the other articles in this collection elaborate on this distinction.

From a complementary perspective, Patricia Silver situates the development of a Puerto Rican presence in the Orlando metropolitan area as concurrent with the area’s economic transformation from a frontier space of orange groves and cattle ranches to a center of entertainment and technology. She traces early Puerto Rican history in Central Florida in its relations to events on the Island and in the diaspora, especially New York, and articulates the pathways that brought Puerto Ricans to the area before the Disney Company transformed the landscape and economy. Silver’s contribution to this collection offers a framework for examining Central Florida as a place with a unique history, in which new forms of puertorriqueñidad (Puerto Ricanness) are emerging from the distinct experiences of those born on the
Island and in the diaspora. In the end, she poses several important questions about how Puerto Ricans in Central Florida are redrawing their cultural identities.

Jorge Duany examines how middle-class Puerto Ricans in the Orlando metropolitan area define themselves, especially in relation to other Latinos. Based on qualitative interviews with Puerto Rican leaders in the area, he explores the migrants’ motivations, decisions, attitudes, and experiences. He finds little evidence for the development of pan-ethnic identities among Orlando Puerto Ricans, blending several national origins, as Latinos. Instead, Duany documents the persistence of national identities and transnational ties to the Island as primary forms of identification for his interviewees. He considers how these affiliations are inflected by class, generation, and race, among other factors. Moreover, his Island-born informants shunned the term “Nuyorican” and distinguished themselves clearly from Puerto Ricans born in the United States. Thus, his research suggests that discourses of Puerto Ricaness still prevail over Hispanic, Latino, or Nuyorican identities. Hence, middle-class Puerto Ricans in Orlando tend to adopt “long-distance nationalism” rather than ethnic, racial, or pan-ethnic affiliations.

In turn, Natalie Underberg’s work with Lilly Carrasquillo, a Puerto Rican artist in Central Florida, illustrates how Puerto Rican cultural practices can blend with other influences, especially from Mexico. In her article, Underberg addresses the representation of diasporic cultures, the use of digital media, and the traditional criteria for the “authenticity” of folk art. Carrasquillo’s art ranges from vejigante masks and other icons of Puerto Ricanness, such as flags, coquíes (several species of Puerto Rican frogs), and the Three Kings, to Mexican themes such as the Day of the Dead or Aztec sun masks. Thus, Underberg invites folklorists to rethink the meaning of cultural authenticity in a diasporic setting such as that of Puerto Ricans in Central Florida. She also proposes that transnational communities are more firmly anchored in personal and cultural attachments than in territorial considerations. Finally, Underberg spells out how creative web pages can reconstruct the fluid and hybrid practices of diasporic Puerto Ricans.

UNDERBERG INVITES FOLKLORISTS TO RETHINK THE MEANING OF CULTURAL AUTHENTICITY IN A DIASPORIC SETTING SUCH AS THAT OF PUERTO RICANS IN CENTRAL FLORIDA.

Diana Ariza also takes up a transnational framework for thinking about Puerto Rican youth in Central Florida. She draws from newspapers, government reports, participant observation, interviews, and focus groups to examine how young Puerto Ricans cope with their new life in Central Florida. She argues that immigration literature too often ignores Puerto Rican experiences, although Puerto Ricans
(especially those arriving from the Island) share many issues with other immigrant groups, such as language barriers and a transnational consciousness. Working largely with middle-class families, Ariza finds that while parents often see an advantage to living in a multicultural environment, many youngsters actively seek out other Puerto Ricans and Latino/as. Whereas some of the adults interviewed pointed to instances of discrimination, most of the younger Puerto Ricans did not express strong feelings of marginalization. Instead, they embraced a kind of “selective assimilation” as they retained a strong connection to their puertorriqueñidad through food, music, and language, yet expressed a desire to incorporate into U.S. society.

The practical challenges of incorporation
Jacqueline Villarrubia-Mendoza focuses on an understudied aspect of the Puerto Rican experience in Orlando. Contrary to Puerto Ricans living in other parts of the United States, most Puerto Ricans in Orlando own their homes. Here, Puerto Ricans have the second highest level of homeownership among Latinos, after Cubans. Moreover, Orlando’s Puerto Ricans experience lower levels of residential segregation from non-Hispanic whites than elsewhere. Using data from the public use sample of the 2007 American Community Survey, Villarrubia-Mendoza compares the main characteristics of Puerto Rican homeowners in Orlando with other Hispanics, blacks, and non-Hispanic whites. In addition, she assesses whether the gaps in homeownership between Puerto Ricans and non-Hispanic whites have been narrowed. She concludes that many Puerto Ricans have achieved unprecedented upward social mobility in the Orlando metropolitan area. However, Puerto Ricans are still less likely than non-Hispanic whites to be homeowners. It is not yet known how the current economic and housing crisis will affect the gains Puerto Ricans have made in Orlando.

The contribution by William Vélez and Giovani Burgos is more sobering than that by Villarrubia-Mendoza. On average, Puerto Ricans in Central Florida earn lower wages than in counties with lower rates of increase in the Puerto Rican population and residential isolation from non-Hispanic whites. Combining data from the 2000 Census and the 2006 American Community Survey, Vélez and Burgos show that many Florida counties—notably Orange, Hillsborough, Lake, Polk, Pasco, and Volusia—have received a tremendous influx of Puerto Ricans. These counties have become magnets for low-skilled workers, largely in the tourist, entertainment, and service industries. However, Puerto Ricans who live in suburban counties with higher proportions of white residents, such as Duval and Broward, tend to earn higher wages than elsewhere. Overall, Vélez and Burgos’s findings suggest that middle-class immigrants might attain parity with non-Hispanic whites, with lower residential segregation, increasing income, and higher education.

Fernando I. Rivera and Giovani Burgos assess the impact of higher levels of education and occupation on the health status of Puerto Ricans in Florida. Despite a dearth of research on the topic, the available literature suggests that Puerto Ricans in the United States have a lower health status than other racial and ethnic groups, including other Latinos. Rivera and Burgos use data from the 2007 American Community Survey on disability rates as indicators of the health status of Puerto Ricans in 72 counties of the United States. As expected, Puerto Ricans in Central Florida, particularly in Orange County, have lower disability rates than those living in the northeastern United States, where Puerto Ricans have traditionally concentrated. Rivera and Burgos speculate that socioeconomic factors, such as
income and education, shape the health outcomes of Puerto Ricans. Further research is needed to substantiate this relationship.

Despite their relatively favorable socioeconomic profile, Puerto Ricans in Central Florida confront serious barriers to full incorporation, especially in the educational system. James Sokolowski, René Antrop-González, and Zoraida Maldonado explore the schooling experiences of 12 Puerto Rican students interviewed in a large high school in Osceola. They find that the school fails to meet most of the educational needs of Puerto Rican and other Latino students, particularly in fostering their academic achievement, post-secondary educational aspirations, Spanish language proficiency, and knowledge of their cultural background. A disturbing trend is that most Latinos, particularly Puerto Ricans, do not pass the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), a standardized measure of educational success. Moreover, Sokolowski, Antrop-González, and Maldonado cite the claims of Puerto Rican students that the school environment strips them of their linguistic and cultural identities. If their results can be generalized to other Central Florida schools, the implications for educational reform are far-reaching and ominous.

In his essay, José E. Cruz documents the great difficulties faced by Puerto Ricans and other Latinos to participate in the political process in Osceola County, where the local government has been reluctant to respond to the changing demographic composition of its electorate. As an expert witness for a voting rights case, Cruz had access to court depositions, disclosure lists, and interviews with local leaders, which helped him explain why the increasing Puerto Rican presence in Osceola has not easily translated into electoral representation. Among other obstacles, he identifies Puerto Ricans’ lower socioeconomic status, educational disadvantages, residential segregation, and linguistic barriers, as well as prejudice and discrimination by established residents. As a result, Latinos—particularly Puerto Ricans—have lower registration and voting turnouts than non-Hispanic whites in Osceola County. By focusing on a little-known Puerto Rican community, Cruz’s research contributes to understanding the political underrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities and refutes the claim that U.S. politics are now post-racial.

Finally, in his annotated bibliography, Julio Raúl Firpo has gathered references to many of the primary and secondary sources on Puerto Rican migration to Central Florida, especially to Orlando. He includes oral histories, newspapers, articles in professional journals, book chapters, dissertations, and reports. This bibliography provides a useful guide for future research.

Conclusion
In an earlier monograph, Jorge Duany and Félix Matos-Rodríguez (2006) identified eight key areas of research on Puerto Ricans in Central Florida: (1) health status; (2) education, housing, employment, and legal issues; (3) business development; (4) transnational ties with Puerto Rico; (5) maintenance of cultural practices; (6) relations with other Latinos; (7) definition of cultural identities; and (8) relations between Island-born and U.S.-born Puerto Ricans. The current issue of CENTRO Journal addresses many of these research problems and substantially advances our knowledge of Puerto Ricans in the Orlando metropolitan area. Important issues that remain to be investigated include Puerto Rican voting patterns, gender differences, religious practices, race relations, and interactions with other Latino groups, as well as regional variations between Puerto Rican settlements.
Altogether, the contributors to this volume offer a nuanced and balanced portrait of “Floriricans,” beyond exaggerated claims about the “brain drain” from the Island or the unqualified socioeconomic success of all Puerto Ricans in the state. They confirm that Puerto Ricans in Central Florida are following a distinct path from other Puerto Rican communities in the United States, particularly in New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia. As documented throughout the volume, the main differences stem from both the migrants’ characteristics and their places of settlement. Whether one looks at occupation, education, or residence, most Puerto Ricans in Orlando, Miami, and Tampa fare better than their counterparts in most other parts of the United States. Scholars should delve into the multiple factors that account for the relatively successful socioeconomic incorporation of Florida Puerto Ricans. They should also explain the growing bifurcation of diasporic communities, according to class, race, generation, and other variables. This new chapter of the Puerto Rican diaspora deserves much more sustained academic attention.

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NOTES
1. For an excellent analysis of recent Puerto Rican migration to South Florida, see Aranda (2009). On identity formation in Orlando, see Sánchez (2009).
2. The Central Florida region currently comprises seven counties: Brevard, Lake, Orange, Osceola, Polk, Seminole, and Volusia.
3. On the suburban settlement patterns of Puerto Ricans in Orlando, see the special section of Polimorfo (2009) put together by a group of architects and planners from the Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico.
4. These numbers include non-Puerto Ricans born in Puerto Rico and exclude Puerto Ricans in Florida who were born somewhere other than Puerto Rico. Currently, the original census forms are publicly available for all censuses through 1930. In 2010, the 1940 census forms enter public domain as well.
5. Counties not listed did not appear in the census data for this group.
6. Oral histories were collected between July 2008 and July 2009 in both Florida and Puerto Rico. In Florida, 75 oral histories were recorded as part of the project “Puerto Ricans in Central Florida from the 1940s to the 1980s: A History.” Participants contacted the project offices to offer their oral histories in response to solicitations via the project website and media coverage in Central Florida. Ten researchers, including project directors Patricia Silver and Natalie Underberg and students from the University of Central Florida, conducted the interviews. In Puerto Rico, Patricia Silver conducted one oral history in July 2008 and three in July 2009. The 2008 interview came through contacts in Orlando. In 2009, participants responded to announcements in Puerto Rican newspapers.
7. Gore was born in Kentucky but by 1933 was a winter resident of Florida, where he owned several newspapers (Hull 1933b: E8). When he arrived in Puerto Rico to be instated as governor, he reportedly brought a wreath from Florida for Ponce de León’s tomb (New York Times 1933: 14).
8. All translations are ours.
9. At the time, the Miami airport was the only Florida airport providing direct travel to and from Puerto Rico. The reports do not indicate whether people remained in Florida or merely traveled through Miami on their way north.
10. The undated brochure refers to “many thousands of veterans” and to “Puerto Rico’s famous 65th US Infantry Division,” which fought in World War II and in Korea.
11. The following four paragraphs have been adapted from Duany and Matos-Rodríguez (2006: 14–15).

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