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SINCE THE 1980s, Latin American migration to the United States has become increasingly diverse in its national origins and settlement patterns. Places formerly dominated by a single group of “Hispanics” or “Latinos”¹—such as Puerto Ricans in New York, Cubans in Miami, or Mexicans in Los Angeles—have received a large influx of people from other countries, such as the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. At the same time, Mexicans have moved *en masse* to New York and other nontraditional destinations like North Carolina and Georgia; many Puerto Ricans have resettled in Orlando, Miami, and Tampa; and Dominicans have dispersed even more widely in Puerto Rico, Spain, Venezuela, and elsewhere.

Scholars have analyzed the growing “Latinization” of such urban spaces as El Barrio, the traditionally Puerto Rican neighborhood of Spanish Harlem in New York; Corona, Queens, with one of the most diverse Hispanic populations in the United States, including Colombians, Dominicans, and Cubans; Humboldt Park, the core of the Puerto Rican community in Chicago; and Little Havana, the Cuban enclave around Calle Ocho in Miami (see Dávila 2003; Laó-Montes and Dávila 2001; Price 2007; Ramos-Zayas 2003; Ricourt and Danta 2003; Stepick et al. 2003). In each of these neighborhoods, immigration from various Latin American countries (especially Mexico and the Dominican Republic in El Barrio, and Nicaragua and Colombia in Little Havana) has reconfigured ethnic, panethnic, national, and transnational identities among Latinos. A crucial issue is whether the immigrants will forge broader alliances with other Hispanics; assert their national origins and transnational connections to their home countries; or combine the two strategies. Historically, most groups have favored a nationally based identification, but little is known about people of mixed Latino heritage, such as Puerto Rican-Dominican, Mexican-Guatemalan, and Ecuadorian-Colombian, or the second generation born in the United States. Rethinking the Puerto Rican diaspora in its larger Latin American and Caribbean context offers a unique opportunity to examine how grounded the Hispanic or Latino label is in immigrants’ experiences in the United States.

Regrettably, researchers have not scrutinized emergent collective affiliations in new Latino destinations such as Orlando, Florida. Between 1990 and 2008, the Hispanic population of Orange County—the heart of the Orlando metropolitan area—more than quadrupled, from 64,946 persons to 266,564 persons. Of the latter, nearly half (121,929) were of Puerto Rican origin (more than half of whom were born

on the Island, while the rest were born in the U.S. mainland). The remainder was primarily of Mexican, Cuban, Colombian, Dominican, and Venezuelan ancestry (U.S. Census Bureau 2009a). During the past three decades, the Orlando metropolitan area had one of the fastest growth rates in the Hispanic, and particularly Puerto Rican, population in the United States. As Susan Eichenberger (2004: 6) notes, “Puerto Ricans have transformed the landscape of the area so much so that they often feel [it] is an extension of the Island.” By this she means that Puerto Ricans have reshaped the Orlando metropolitan area in demographic, cultural, linguistic, and even religious terms. This essay inquires whether, how, and to what extent panethnic identities, based on the amalgamation of several national origins, have arisen among Puerto Rican migrants to Orlando.

ONE OF THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE RECENT PUERTO RICAN EXODUS TO ORLANDO IS A LARGE NUMBER OF WELL-EDUCATED PROFESSIONALS AND MANAGERS, MOST OF WHOM DEFINE THEMSELVES AS WHITE IN THE CENSUS.

In 2006, Félix Matos-Rodríguez and I predicted that Puerto Ricans in Central Florida would follow a path different from that of other Puerto Rican communities in the United States. To begin, the socioeconomic profile of Puerto Ricans in the Orlando metropolitan area is much more favorable than in New York City (see Table 1). One of the distinctive features of the recent Puerto Rican exodus to Orlando is a large number of well-educated professionals and managers, most of whom define themselves as white in the census (see Table 2). This group has had a significant impact on Puerto Ricans’ settlement patterns, as well as on their reception by established residents of Central Florida. For instance, Puerto Ricans in Orlando are more likely to own their houses and to live in suburban neighborhoods than in New York. In Orlando, the social and geographic locations of the Puerto Rican population differ greatly from the poor inner-city barrios of the Northeast or the Midwest (Concepción Torres 2008; Duany 2006; Villarrubia-Mendoza 2007). Despite moderate degrees of residential segregation, Puerto Ricans in Central Florida are not as isolated from non-Hispanic whites as elsewhere (Vargas-Ramos 2006).

This essay analyzes in-depth interviews with Puerto Rican business, civic, political, educational, and religious leaders in Orlando. I am particularly interested in examining how this privileged group represents itself as part of the growing Spanish-speaking population of Central Florida. A recurrent theme in our conversations was Puerto Ricans’ contested relations with other Latinos, including

TABLE 1: Selected Characteristics of Puerto Ricans in the United States, New York City, and the Orlando-Kissimmee Metropolitan Area — 2008^a

	UNITED STATES	NEW YORK CITY	ORLANDO-KISSIMMEE
Bachelor's degree	10.7	8.3	11.4
Graduate or professional degree	5.1	4.5	4.0
Unemployed	10.0	9.8	10.4
Managers and professionals	26.8	27.2	23.4
Service workers	21.7	26.0	22.5
Self-employed workers	3.7	4.0	2.6
Median household income (\$)	39,039	30,456	39,778
Poverty rate	24.0	29.7	16.2
Owner-occupied housing units	40.2	18.0	55.3

^a In percentages, except where otherwise noted.

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

TABLE 2: Race of Puerto Ricans in Central Florida, New York City, the United States, and Puerto Rico, According to the 2000 Census (in Percentages)

	CENTRAL FLORIDIA	NEW YORK CITY	ENTIRE UNITED STATES	PUERTO RICO
White	63.0	43.6	46.4	80.5
Black or African American	3.0	7.9	6.4	8.0
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.3	0.7	0.7	0.4
Asian	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.3
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.0
Some other race	27.1	41.5	38.2	6.8
Two or more races	6.2	6.1	7.6	4.2
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Duany and Matos-Rodríguez (2006), based on census data.

Cubans, Venezuelans, Mexicans, and Colombians. Many of the interviewees insisted on preserving and promoting Puerto Rican culture, especially through community organizations, festivals, businesses, and other institutions. Furthermore, the interviews generated a wealth of qualitative data on how middle-class members of Orlando's Puerto Rican community—primarily those born and raised on the Island—maintained transnational connections, especially kinship ties, with the homeland. This research complements earlier work based largely on census statistics (De Jesús and Vasquez 2007; Duany and Matos-Rodríguez 2006; Villarrubia-Mendoza 2007), by providing new insights into the immigrants' personal motivations, decisions, attitudes, and experiences. Most of all, the results shed light on how middle-class Puerto Ricans in Orlando construct and represent their identities.²

Why study Puerto Ricans in Orlando?

First, the Puerto Rican population in Florida is significant, demographically as well as economically. The U.S. Census Bureau (2009a) found that the number of Puerto Ricans residing in the state nearly doubled during the 1990s. According to the 2008 American Community Survey, Florida had the second largest number of stateside Puerto Ricans (744,473), after New York. The Orlando-Kissimmee metropolitan area had 222,481 Puerto Rican residents, or 47 percent of the area's Hispanic population. Moreover, Puerto Ricans are highly concentrated in several counties, such as Orange and Osceola, and in specific localities, such as the middle-class enclaves of Meadow Woods and Buena Ventura Lakes, or the more economically disadvantaged areas in Kissimmee. Moreover, Puerto Ricans have established numerous enterprises in

Florida, mostly in retail trade, services, transportation, and communication. In 2002, Puerto Ricans owned 4,963 businesses (compared to 4,537 owned by Cubans) in the Orlando metropolitan area (U.S. Census Bureau 2006). Compared with Puerto Ricans in New York City, those residing in Orlando have higher income, occupational, and educational levels (Duany and Matos-Rodríguez 2006).

In addition, the Puerto Rican electorate in Florida could influence local, state, and even presidential elections. The mass media have paid much attention to the growing strength of the Democratic Party in Central Florida, largely due to the support of Puerto Ricans and other Hispanics, in contrast to the predominantly Republican Cubans in South Florida (see, for example, Glanton 2000; Lizza 2000; Milligan 2000). According to journalistic sources, more than 70 percent of Puerto Rican voters in Florida supported the Democratic candidate, Al Gore, in the 2000 presidential elections. In 2004, 59 percent of Florida's Puerto Ricans favored Senator John Kerry, compared to 39 percent who supported the reelection of President George W. Bush. That year, nearly 200,000 Puerto Ricans were eligible to vote in Florida, the second largest number after New York's almost 300,000 Puerto Ricans (Delgado 2001, 2008; Friedman 2004). In 2008, Puerto Ricans and other Hispanics helped to elect President Barack Obama. Yet the political activities of Puerto Ricans in Florida have not been well documented from a social scientific perspective. This lack of information is intriguing because Puerto Ricans are the second largest Latino group in the United States (after Mexicans) and Florida (after Cubans), and the largest in Orlando, one of the main gateways for new immigrants from Latin America (along with Miami).

THE MASS MEDIA HAVE PAID MUCH ATTENTION TO THE GROWING STRENGTH OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY IN CENTRAL FLORIDA, LARGELY DUE TO THE SUPPORT OF PUERTO RICANS AND OTHER HISPANICS, IN CONTRAST TO THE PREDOMINANTLY REPUBLICAN CUBANS IN SOUTH FLORIDA.

Studying the Puerto Rican experience in Florida can contribute substantially to the literature on the Puerto Rican diaspora, which has focused on the older communities in New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia (see Haslip-Viera et al. 2004; Pérez 2004; Ramos-Zayas 2003; Whalen 2001; Whalen and Vázquez-Hernández 2005). Until recently, few ethnographic studies of Florida Puerto Ricans had been

conducted (see Aranda 2009; Aranda et al. 2009; Concepción Torres 2008; Eichenberger 2004; Hernández Cruz 2002; Pérez 2008; Sánchez 2009).³ Most social research on contemporary Hispanic immigration in Florida has focused on Miami's Cuban enclave, while historical research has concentrated on Cubans in the Tampa area in the late nineteenth century (see Greenbaum 2002; Grenier and Pérez 2003; Portes and Stepick 1993). Consequently, such pressing issues as Puerto Ricans' changing settlement patterns, diverse class composition, relations with other Hispanics, or adoption of a Latino identity, are not well understood.

Finally, exploring the Puerto Rican diaspora in Florida can advance current knowledge of transnational migration. Most of the academic literature has neglected the Puerto Rican situation as an example of multiple links between people of the same national origin across great distances and over long periods of time (for exceptions to this trend, see Alicea 1997; Aranda 2007; Duany 2002; Pérez 2004; Toro-Morn and Alicea 2003). This is an unfortunate omission, because Puerto Rico is a classic case of the large-scale circulation of people and the first "airborne migration" after World War II (see Alicea 1990; Hernández Alvarez 1967; Hernández Cruz 1994; Meléndez 1993). Furthermore, the Puerto Rican government was one of the earliest states, sovereign or not, to sponsor transnational migration in the 1940s (Lapp 1990).⁴ How Puerto Ricans, who are U.S. citizens by birth, compare to other transnational migrants, such as Mexicans or Dominicans, most of whom are not U.S. citizens, merits further investigation. So does the question of how Puerto Ricans cross the cultural border with the United States, which is technically not an international boundary because Puerto Rico is a U.S. Commonwealth, a territory that "belongs to but is not part" of the United States. And yet, the geographic, linguistic, religious, and racial contrasts between the Island and the mainland are sufficiently large to conceive them as "transnational." Among other differences, Puerto Ricans acquire the full rights of U.S. citizenship—such as voting for the President or members of Congress—as well as its responsibilities—such as paying federal income taxes—only when they move to the U.S. mainland.

THE PUERTO RICAN GOVERNMENT WAS ONE OF THE EARLIEST STATES, SOVEREIGN OR NOT, TO SPONSOR TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION IN THE 1940S.

Transnationalism, panethnicity, and racialization

Broadly defined, transnationalism refers to the maintenance of social, economic, political, and cultural ties between migrants and their communities of origin. Much of the relevant literature takes for granted that transnationalism only occurs between nation-states, that is, between sovereign countries (see the classic statements on the subject by Basch et al. 1994; Glick Schiller et al. 1992).

However, every year, tens of thousands of Puerto Ricans move to the United States, just as other Caribbean peoples relocate to their current or former European metropolises, such as the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, and Spain. Clara Rodríguez (1989) and Ramón Grosfoguel (2003) have argued persuasively that Puerto Ricans have more in common with “colonial migrants” from the French or Dutch Antilles, than with citizens of independent countries such as the Dominican Republic or Mexico. As citizens of their metropolises, colonial subjects do not need a visa to move abroad or change their legal status to vote. Therefore, they may circulate more frequently between their places of origin and destination than those who lack legal access to migration. At the same time, the dominant Euro-American imaginary tends to racialize colonial subjects as inferior Others and stereotype them as criminal, lazy, dumb, dirty, and uncivilized. Hence, colonial migrants usually face strong barriers to their full socioeconomic incorporation in their “mother countries.”

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The term “colonial transnationalism” may be applied to migrants from colonial peripheries to metropolitan centers. Colonial migrants can be considered transnational because they transgress the geographic, cultural, linguistic, and racial borders between peripheral and core countries. Thus, the differences and similarities among various types of transnational migrants should be spelled out, depending on whether and how they actually cross legal frontiers. In this essay, I propose to

analytically decouple the nation from the state and assess the differential impact of crossing a boundary—defined as a juridical and administrative division between independent countries—as opposed to a border—understood as a geographic and cultural contact zone, such as the one between the Island and the U.S. mainland (see Kearney 1991).⁵ In this sense, Puerto Ricans cross multiple borders—geographic, cultural, linguistic, and racial—when they move to the United States. They also become incorporated into a different political system that expands their constitutional rights by means of their territorial relocation.

The transnational literature challenges “straight-line assimilation” models that posited the inevitable and irreversible incorporation of immigrants into their host societies, through gradual absorption of their linguistic, religious, and other cultural differences. Instead, transnationalists have shown that contemporary migrants may develop multiple identities, lead dual lives, express loyalties to more than one state, and practice hybrid cultures (Basch et al. 1994; Duany 2008 [1994]; Glick Schiller et al. 1992, 1995; Itzigsohn et al. 1999; Levitt 2001; Portes et al. 1999). Current strategies of immigrant adaptation do not necessarily lead to complete “assimilation” by the second or third generation, as earlier theories had predicted. Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou (1993) have argued that “segmented assimilation” includes various forms of immigrant incorporation, depending on their human capital, context of reception, place of residence, and other variables. One possibility is that some immigrant groups might adopt the lifestyle of an ethnic or racial minority such as Hispanics, African Americans, or “people of color.”

How people define themselves in a transnational context remains poorly documented. Even less understood is how transnational migrants forge new identities, based exclusively neither on their home countries nor on the dominant groups in the host society, but on panethnic allegiances such as those often pursued by Latinos or Asians in the United States. Much of this process of identity construction responds to ethnic and racial categories imposed by public officials, media executives, and intellectuals (see Cobas et al. 2009; Flores 2000; Oboler 1995). But a panethnic consciousness may also arise from the daily interaction (*convivencia diaria*) between various groups of Latin American immigrants (Ricourt and Danta 2003). A grassroots sense of *Latinidad* can be traced to the late-nineteenth century settlements of Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Spanish origin in New York City (Laó and Dávila 2001).

Nowadays, self-classification as “Latino” or “Hispanic” may also be a way to evade the polar extremes of the U.S. racial stratification system. For example, Dominican immigrants in New York City and Providence, Rhode Island, usually adopt the Hispanic or Latino moniker as an intermediate category between whites and blacks (Bailey 2002; Itzigsohn 2006; Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral 2000). Similarly, Afro-Cuban immigrants in Austin, Texas, and Albuquerque, New Mexico, negotiate their identities as both “black” and “Hispanic,” in a context where “Cuban” has little resonance (Newby and Dowling 2007). For Puerto Ricans in the United States, questions of identity remain extremely elusive, as they may define themselves as a “racial,” ethnic, national, or transnational group, as well as part of a larger Latino community, according to various political projects, social and geographic locations, and historical moments (see Duany 2002; Negrón-Muntaner and Grosfoguel 1997; Padilla 1985).

Panethnic labels typically collapse people who “look” or “sound” the same to the dominant majority into a single group based on physical appearance, language, family background, or geographic origin. As Suzanne Oboler (1995:2) has noted, a panethnic term such as Hispanic or Latino (or Asian or Oriental) often “homogenizes

class experiences and neglects many different linguistic, racial, and ethnic groups within the different nationalities themselves.” For instance, the U.S. government, media, and public opinion commonly assume that all Hispanics or Latinos are racially mixed. In the United States, the “Latin look” is usually characterized by olive or brown skin and dark, straight hair (Dávila 2001; Mendible 2007). This body type is ambiguously located between dominant Anglo-American images of whiteness and blackness.

FOR PUERTO RICANS IN THE UNITED STATES, QUESTIONS OF IDENTITY REMAIN EXTREMELY ELUSIVE, AS THEY MAY DEFINE THEMSELVES AS A “RACIAL,” ETHNIC, NATIONAL, OR TRANSNATIONAL GROUP, AS WELL AS PART OF A LARGER LATINO COMMUNITY, ACCORDING TO VARIOUS POLITICAL PROJECTS, SOCIAL AND GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS, AND HISTORICAL MOMENTS.

Despite little comparative work on the subject (see De Genova 2006), the social construction of Latinos and Asians in the United States follows a similar racial logic: neither group is considered white, but they are not widely regarded as black either. As a result, the federal government has created ethnoracial categories to describe populations that do not fit easily within the white/black binary. In 1980, the Census Bureau asked all residents of the United States if they were of Spanish or Hispanic origin, including Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Central and South Americans, and Spaniards (Rodríguez 2000). Since then, the census has also lumped together several groups under the “Asian and Pacific Islander” heading, including Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese, as well as Hawaiian, Guamanian, Samoan, and other native peoples of the Pacific Islands (Reeves and Bennett 2003).

A lively academic and public debate has emerged about the overlapping of Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Latino identities in the United States. For some authors, Puerto Ricans are Hispanic or Latino by default, because they can trace their origin to a Spanish-speaking country. Furthermore, Puerto Ricans, together with Mexicans, constitute the prototypes of the Hispanic category popularized since the 1970s. For others, *Latinidad* or *Hispanidad* refers to the idea that, despite their

differences, the peoples originating in Latin America share a geographic, historical, cultural, and linguistic background (Diaz McConnell and Delgado-Romero 2004; Ricourt and Danta 2003). According to its critics, the Hispanic/Latino classification glosses over a wide variety of immigrant histories, colonial legacies, racial and ethnic groups, social classes, cultural traditions, languages, and dialects (Dávila 2001, 2008; De Genova and Ramos-Zayas 2003; Flores 2000; Oboler 1995). Thus, some argue, Puerto Ricans should not be subsumed under a moniker that erases such fundamental differences with other populations. This essay addresses whether middle-class Puerto Ricans in Orlando identify primarily as an ethnic, national, or panethnic group.

RESEARCHING ORLANDO RICANS

Sample

Sixteen members of the Puerto Rican community in the Orlando metropolitan area were interviewed for this study. The participants were chosen because of their reputation or referral by other well-known Puerto Ricans. I sought representatives from various business, civic, political, educational, and religious sectors of the population. The two main criteria for selection were Puerto Rican birth or origin; and recognition as a leader of Orlando's Puerto Rican community. The interviewees included a similar proportion of men and women, ranged between 27 and 69 years of age, and most were born and raised on the Island. All had completed at least a college degree, worked in managerial or professional occupations, and spoke both Spanish and English (although English was the second language for most). At the time of the interview, the respondents had lived an average of 24 years in the United States. Table 3 details the main characteristics of the sample. As expected, the interviewees represent the highly educated and upper-status occupational sectors of the Puerto Rican population in the Orlando-Kissimmee metropolitan area.⁶

Instrument

With her permission, I adapted the semi-structured interview guide developed by Elizabeth Aranda (2007) to study transnational migration between Puerto Rico and the United States. The guide included 28 open-ended questions about the informants' socioeconomic profile, migration history, participation in voluntary associations, kinship and friendship networks, and identity. I also inquired about the participants' relations with Cubans and other Hispanics, as well as their personal, economic, and business links with the Island. A crucial part of the interviews was to query the informants' definition of themselves as Puerto Rican, Hispanic, Latino, or some other ethnic category. Finally, I explored the cultural differences between Island-born and mainland-born Puerto Ricans. On average, each interview lasted about an hour and a half. Although I gave my informants the choice of speaking Spanish or English, only one conducted the entire interview in English.

Procedure

To begin, I drew a list of Puerto Rican voluntary associations in the Orlando metropolitan area. Then I identified the leaders of these associations, with the help of a prominent member of the Puerto Rican community. The next step was to telephone them and set up an appointment in a place of their choice, usually their office or a public place, such as a coffee house or fast-food restaurant. I explained

TABLE 3: Characteristics of the Interview Sample (N=16)

SEX	AGE	BIRTHPLACE	PLACE WHERE PERSON WAS RAISED	EDUCATION	CURRENT OCCUPATION AND INDUSTRY	FLUENCY IN SPANISH LANGUAGE ^a	FLUENCY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ^a	YEAR OF FIRST TRIP TO U.S.
Female	58	Mayagüez, PR	Puerto Rico	Ph.D.	Manager, public administration	Native	Fluent	1973
Male	39	San Juan, PR	Puerto Rico and United States	M.A.	Professional, professional services	Native	"As good as my Spanish"	1979
Female	49	Brooklyn, NY	United States and Puerto Rico	M.A.	Manager, public administration	Fluent	Native	1979
Female	55	Cayey, PR	Puerto Rico	Ph.D.	Manager, public administration	Native	Native	1976
Male	35	Caguas, PR	Puerto Rico	M.A.	Manager, public administration	Native	Fluent	1993
Male	64	Santurce, PR	Puerto Rico	B.A.	Retired (formerly sales manager, information)	Native	Fluent	1978
Female	69	Mayagüez, PR	Puerto Rico and United States	B.A.	Retired (formerly manager, retail trade)	"Primary"	Fluent	1945
Male	40	San Juan, PR	Puerto Rico	B.A.	Private contractor, construction	Native	"Medium"	1987
Male	46	Youngstown, OH	United States and Puerto Rico	B.A.	Manager, public administration	"Primary"	Fluent	1985
Female	54	Río Piedras, PR	Puerto Rico	B.A.	Manager, communication	Native	Fluent	1981
Female	51	Raleigh, North Carolina	Puerto Rico	M.A.	Manager, communication	Native	Fluent	2005
Male	47	Hato Rey, PR	Puerto Rico	B.A.	Professional, communication	Native	"Second language"	1977
Female	37	San Juan, PR	Puerto Rico	Ph.D.	Professional, education	Native	Fluent	1989
Male	43	San Juan, PR	Puerto Rico	M.S.	Manager, communication	Fluent	"Primary"	1981
Female	61	San Juan, PR	Puerto Rico	B.A.	Manager, public administration	Native	Fluent	1993
Female	27	Ponce, PR	Puerto Rico	B.A.	Professional, communication	Native	Fluent	2005

^a In the informant's estimation.

^b In the case of informants born in the United States, the date refers to the year of their first return trip from the Island to the mainland.

the basic purpose of my study and assured participants that the results would be confidential. During the interview, I took extensive notes while the informants answered my questions. I decided not to tape record the interviews to maximize the informal nature of the conversation and to make participants more comfortable with my questions. At the end of the interview, I asked the informants to recommend other persons that I should contact for this project. Eventually, many names on my list began to repeat themselves. In the following pages, I use pseudonyms to protect the respondents' identities.

MIGRATION HISTORIES

The first generation

Most of my informants migrated as adults from Puerto Rico to the United States. Many had lived elsewhere in the mainland before relocating to Orlando, including New York, New Jersey, Texas, Georgia, Ohio, and North Carolina. For example, Sandra moved from the Island in 1973 to study for her Ph.D. in a northeastern university. After completing her degree, she "couldn't stand the cold any more," so in 1998 she moved to Orlando. "We used to come here often on vacations," she remembered, and she and her husband liked the area's Hispanic environment, economic development, and job opportunities. Moreover, "coming to Orlando allowed me to reconnect with the Puerto Rican community... Now you can even find many products from Puerto Rico in local supermarkets." Although she travels to Puerto Rico every two years, she does not plan to live there, because her children and grandchildren are in Orlando.

Margarita also pursued her graduate education in the United States. In 1989, she began her master's degree in New York and later decided to continue her schooling in Europe. She returned to Puerto Rico for a year and eventually moved back to the United States for her doctorate. In 1996, Margarita finally settled down in Orlando, where she found work in her professional specialization. She has visited the Island many times since then—almost twice a year—especially to see her parents, who still own a house there. When asked if she would return to live there permanently, Margarita responded: "Return? I don't know. I'm always changing. I won't say I won't, I won't say I will. My parents and family are in Puerto Rico. I feel more integrated to the United States and South America. My plans are here."

After graduating from high school in Puerto Rico in 1981, Jorge enrolled at the University of Central Florida. After a year and a half, he transferred to a Texas college. Upon graduation, he started working and married there. For 13 years, Jorge lived in a largely Mexican-American town, where he felt isolated because he was the only one with his last name. In 1996, he moved back to Orlando and has lived here since. He feels "more comfortable here" because of the area's climate, exciting city life, nearness to the Island, and acceptance of the Puerto Rican community. "It's good to know others like you," Jorge noted.

Looking for a "better quality of life," Raquel took an early retirement from her job as a marketing executive in Puerto Rico. Although her first choice was Atlanta, she moved to Orlando in 1993, after divorcing her husband, with her three children. One of her sons had already traveled to Florida when he was in high school. All were totally bilingual because they had attended a good private school in San Juan. That helped them to integrate with their new peer groups in Orlando. For her

sixth-grade daughter, the family's change of residence was "very traumatic." In the beginning, Raquel felt discrimination in Orlando because of her Spanish last name. Although it took two or three years of adjustment, Raquel now feels at home here.

"I never imagined I would live here," Diana admitted. "But I came for my honeymoon and liked the place, its climate, and its friendly people." In 1981, she and her husband decided to move to Orlando, primarily because one of her three children had allergies and needed a change of environment. At the time of the interview, Diana had been living in the area for 26 years. A recent widow, she now heads a local media company. She does not intend to return to live on the Island.

"RETURN? I DON'T KNOW. I'M ALWAYS CHANGING. I WON'T SAY I WON'T, I WON'T SAY I WILL. MY PARENTS AND FAMILY ARE IN PUERTO RICO. I FEEL MORE INTEGRATED TO THE UNITED STATES AND SOUTH AMERICA. MY PLANS ARE HERE."

Alberto's migration history was complicated. He noted that because he objected joining the U.S. Army in 1968, he felt political persecution in Puerto Rico. In 1978, he first moved with his mother to Texas, where he worked in three different cities for several years. His employer, an information processing company, later transferred him to Atlanta. He finally retired in Orlando in the year 2000 with his family of five. Although Alberto likes Orlando's weather, he feels closer to Puerto Rico and plans to move there, where he owns a house. Only his commitment to a local voluntary association holds him down for now.

Among the interviewees, Rosa was the most recent immigrant from Puerto Rico. When I met her, she had lived in Orlando less than a year (although she had spent a few months in the area before). She came with her husband, while the rest of her family stayed on the Island. She was drawn to Orlando by its employment opportunities, public schools, climate, quality of life, Hispanic population, and tranquility. "I don't think I'll go back," Rosa stated. "The economy is bad, the environment is unfavorable, and there's no security" on the Island. Despite the recent recession in the United States, life seems better to her in Orlando than in San Juan.

Although the personal motivations of first-generation immigrants from Puerto Rico ranged widely, economic considerations did not figure prominently among them. My informants mentioned educational opportunities, professional advancement, "quality of life," climate, and health concerns more frequently than finding a job or earning a higher salary in Orlando. As Jorge pointed out, "We didn't come for economic reasons." This is a major difference between a middle-class and a

lower-class migrant flow, which is primarily motivated by the search for employment abroad. Compared to earlier movements from Puerto Rico to New York or Chicago, the recent movement to Orlando is more strongly associated with efforts to maintain or achieve middle-class status.

The one-and-a half generation

Although Miriam was born in Mayagüez, she and her parents moved to New York in 1945 aboard the famous steamboat, the *Marine Tiger*. She was only eight years old then. Since 1959, she has visited the Island once a year. Her parents eventually moved back to Puerto Rico, where she learned to speak Spanish well. She later moved to the mainland, only to return to Puerto Rico in 1980. After divorcing her husband, Miriam relocated in the U.S. seven years later, because her daughter was sick and could not be treated in Puerto Rico. She decided to come to Central Florida, where she became active in the Puerto Rican community. “The same thing happened here as when I came on the *Marine Tiger*.... They discriminated against me in New York. They also discriminated against me in Puerto Rico.”

Manuel’s family moved from San Juan to Miami when he was 11 years old. He is typical of the “1.5 generation” of immigrants who left their country of birth as youngsters. In 1979, Manuel’s father was transferred to Miami by his employer, a major airline company, but he soon lost his job there. Because his older brother was living in Orlando, the entire family moved north. Manuel still has close relatives in Miami as well as in Tampa. Whether he returns to live permanently on the Island depends on his employer.

“THE SAME THING HAPPENED
HERE AS WHEN I CAME ON
THE *MARINE TIGER*.... THEY
DISCRIMINATED AGAINST ME
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IN PUERTO RICO.”

Similarly, Raúl first came to Orlando as a teenager. “We left Puerto Rico for security reasons. They broke into our house twice in the 1970s, even though we lived in gated communities.” In 1977, his father established a small business in South Florida, while his sister studied in the Midwest. Because the family firm did not do well, they moved further north in Florida. After graduating from high school, Raúl attended the University of Central Florida and later found work in Orlando. “There were very few (*éramos cuatro gatos*) of us [Puerto Ricans] here in 1985,” he recalled. He now travels to the Island once or twice a year, but does not anticipate resettling there: “My wife is not Puerto Rican, and my daughters were born here. I don’t see myself there, but I don’t say I never will (*no digo de esa agua no beberé*).”

As was to be expected, members of the 1.5 generation of immigrants moved to Orlando as a result of their parents' decisions. Most of them eventually settled in the area, but others were not completely rooted there. Some expressed feeling "in-between" the United States and Puerto Rico, and not being welcome in either country. Their plans to return to Puerto Rico or stay in Florida were more tentative than those of the first or the second generation. In any case, they followed a typically middle-class mode of incorporation once they settled in the Orlando metropolitan area.

The second generation

Circular migration has been a way of life for Angel, who was born in Ohio, but in 1969 his family moved to New York, when he was eight years old. Sometime later, they returned to Bayamón, Puerto Rico. "Both languages were spoken at home.... They used to make fun of you in elementary school because of your accent in Spanish," Angel remembered. He attended college in the United States and went back to the Island when he finished his B.A. In 1985, Angel moved to Orlando because his parents and other relatives were living here. "It was a safe place for the family and to raise children," he said. "Now it's not so safe as before." Angel and his wife keep a summer home in Puerto Rico, where they spend their vacations. "We love it (*nos fascina*) there... The link to the Island can't be broken," he pointed out.

THE FEW SECOND-GENERATION IMMIGRANTS INTERVIEWED FOR THIS STUDY DID NOT DIFFER GREATLY FROM OTHER PARTICIPANTS, AT LEAST REGARDING THEIR MIGRATION HISTORIES.

Although Luisa was born in North Carolina, her parents took her to Puerto Rico when she was only three months old. She grew up and spent most of her life on the Island. In 2005, she accepted a good job offer in Orlando. "In the beginning," she remembered, "I thought it was going to be very difficult to adapt to this environment. I felt like a fish out of water." But eventually she felt better. "Everyone speaks Spanish here." She now travels to Puerto Rico every three months. She hopes to retire in Puerto Rico, "to grow old with my people." Sometime after the interview, Luisa returned to work on the Island.

Of all my informants, only María was born and raised in the U.S. mainland, specifically in New York City. Even she experienced a return to the Island. María moved to Puerto Rico with her family when she was ten years old, left the Island again when she was 16, completed her university education in the U.S., and has not traveled to Puerto Rico in 14 years. She was the only one in the

sample who did not visit the Island regularly. However, she intended to do research there for her doctoral dissertation.

The few second-generation immigrants interviewed for this study did not differ greatly from other participants, at least regarding their migration histories. They were as mobile as the other informants, including multiple changes of residence between the United States and Puerto Rico. Their emotional connections to the Island appeared as strong as the connections of those who were born and raised there. More research is needed to unveil the differences between first- and second-generation Puerto Rican immigrants in Orlando.

Altogether, the informants' migration histories displayed a variety of personal motivations, including studying, working, retiring, seeking medical treatment or a safer environment, and following their relatives. A critical event in the life cycle, such as a divorce or a relative's illness, often triggered the decision to move abroad. Expanding economic opportunities, as well as a growing Hispanic population and a relatively mild climate, attracted Puerto Ricans to Central Florida. Many of my informants had visited the area as tourists before relocating there. Some of them had already lived in the United States. As I will elaborate below, informal social contacts—such as kinship and friendship networks—also put Orlando in the migrants' mental map.

KINSHIP AND FRIENDSHIP NETWORKS

The participants in this study sustained a far-flung web of social ties with Puerto Rican communities on the Island and in the United States. Some were still focused on their families in Puerto Rico, while most had reoriented their everyday life toward the U.S. mainland. All had numerous contacts in both places. The quantity, density, and frequency of kinship and friendship networks largely shaped the informants' identity, as well as their plans to remain in Orlando or return to the Island. Many could be classified as "transnational" in that they kept dense and regular ties with their home country.

Retaining a primary Island focus

Some respondents expressed a stronger emotional attachment to the homeland than others. Most of Clarita's relatives, including her mother, remain in Puerto Rico. They often visit her in Orlando and she travels back home every year. "I'm very proud of my roots," she asserted. She arrived in Orlando in 1976 with her five-year-old son, after divorcing her husband. Clarita's mother owns a house in Puerto Rico as well as in Orlando.

Similarly, most of Angel's family is still in Puerto Rico, including his cousins, uncles, aunts, nephews, and nieces. "They're spread all over the Island," he pointed out. His mother-in-law also stayed in Puerto Rico. Angel keeps in touch with his relatives by telephone, mail, and mutual visits. These two cases illustrate the pattern of tightly knit transnational families between Central Florida and Puerto Rico.

Maintaining a dual orientation

Other informants juggled their kinship and friendship ties to the Island as well as to the mainland. Ernesto's extended family is split between Puerto Rico and Florida. His parents moved to Orlando and his uncles and aunts also retired here, whereas his cousins still live on the Island. He keeps in touch with them

by telephone and by traveling two or three times a year to the Island, for business-related activities. However, he does not remain in contact with his friends there. “Each one goes on with his life,” Ernesto explained. “I’m not interested in attending high school reunions.”

When Raquel first moved to Orlando, she dearly missed her “very select circle of friends” in Puerto Rico. In the beginning, “it was very difficult to connect with a group of friends” in Orlando. So she joined several voluntary associations, made a difficult work transition, and found a better job. “Being by yourself and having the responsibility of advancing your family (*echar la familia pa'lante*)” was very stressful, especially raising three children. She would not go back to live in Puerto Rico, because she now feels “very well adapted and involved here.” “All of my children are here,” she asserted. “We sold everything over there.” But she and her children visit the Island at least once a year. “I still have fabulous friends over there,” Raquel explained. “I don’t relate to [the rest of] my family in Puerto Rico.”

“I DON’T RELATE TO [THE REST OF] MY FAMILY IN PUERTO RICO.”

Alberto’s family is widely dispersed. His sister and niece live in Orlando, but his brother, son, and granddaughters live in Puerto Rico. He also has relatives in Michigan and Texas. He contacts them regularly by e-mail, sending and receiving jokes, comments, and greetings. He also telephones his six siblings frequently. Once a year, the family gets together in Puerto Rico. These periodic visits help rekindle the emotional connections to the Island, as Aranda has documented (2007) in her fieldwork. They help immigrants to “keep one foot here and one foot there,” as the popular expression goes.

Reorienting social ties toward the U.S. mainland

The majority of the respondents had many friends and relatives in the Orlando area. Most of Sandra’s friends are Puerto Rican, although they include other Hispanics, such as Cubans, Colombians, and Venezuelans, as well as Anglos. She separated from her Puerto Rican husband years ago, before coming to Orlando. Her children and grandchildren grew up here, while the rest of her family remained in Mayagüez. She telephones her relatives in Puerto Rico every week. Sandra often receives relatives and friends, especially to visit Disney World and other recreational theme parks. She doubts that she could grow accustomed to living on the Island again, after so many years abroad.

Raúl’s closest relatives, including his parents and daughters, live in Orlando. His sister lives in Atlanta and his father in Wisconsin, but his mother and her family remain in San Juan. They used to come every year to visit. But their main contact was an aunt who died recently. Now, they do not call each other as often as they did before. Raúl still communicates with some of his high school friends, who recently organized a class reunion in Puerto Rico. “I haven’t seen most of them” since they graduated 25 years ago.

When I asked Jorge where his family lived, he made a quick inventory: a brother in Miami, another in Puerto Rico, a sister in California, a sister and his father in Orlando. They all meet in Orlando and in Puerto Rico whenever they can.

Jorge keeps in contact with his relatives on the Island, usually by e-mail and occasionally by telephone. Most of his friends, both Anglo and Hispanic, live in the United States.

Manuel also keeps in touch with relatives and friends in Miami, Tampa, and San Jua by talking constantly on the telephone. Most of his immediate relatives now live in Florida. They often get together, usually in Tampa, on special occasions such as birthdays, Christmas, and New Year's Eve. Every year Manuel visits Puerto Rico, where he still has cousins and friends.

Diana's five children live in Orlando, as well as her parents and grandchildren. She also has relatives in South Florida and Kentucky. Nevertheless, the extended family gets together in Puerto Rico every five years. She still keeps an apartment in San Juan, near the beach. "I had to see the sea," she explained. Diana's situation clearly illustrates the maintenance of "dual home bases" in the United States and Puerto Rico (Alicea 1990), even though she has recentered her kinship networks on the mainland.

Although she does not visit her siblings in Puerto Rico, Miriam maintains strong family contacts in New York, especially by telephone. Only one brother visits her frequently in Orlando. Her father's children are "all over" (*regados*) and several cousins live on the Island, especially in Arecibo. Some time ago, she organized a large family gathering in Puerto Rico. Until recently, she owned a house on the Island, which she rented to other tenants, as well as some land and a car. Eventually, she sold everything and moved to Orlando. Like the other cases mentioned in this section, Miriam has reoriented her most significant kinship networks toward the United States.

In varying degrees, my informants' kinship and friendship networks bridged Puerto Rico and the United States. Most had shifted their immediate social ties to Orlando and other mainland cities. Some remained centered on the Island. Like the participants in Aranda's (2007) and Alicea's (1990) studies, many of my interviewees were part of extended transnational families that sustained contact through telephone calls, correspondence, and visits. Most were still connected to the Island through close friends, business associates, and other social contacts. Their socioeconomic resources allow them to travel frequently back to the Island. Their sense of identity was embedded in long-distance relations, not just in their current geographic locations.

IDENTITY IN QUESTION

Puerto Rican

Toward the end of the interview, I asked my informants: "How would you define yourself, as Puerto Rican, Hispanic, Latino, or something else?" The overwhelming response—for 14 out of 16 interviewees—was simply Puerto Rican. Sandra stated that she felt "100 percent Puerto Rican," as did her children. For her, the Island is "the fatherland I love, even though it's far away.... When I moved here, I renovated my ties [to the Island] and my identity has never changed." She further explained: "Many [Puerto Ricans] live with one leg here and another in Puerto Rico. We never forget about over there. There's an underlying connection. You hear the news on TV, on the radio, and on the computer. There's communication with Puerto Rico through Wapa América,

Univisión, and Telemundo [television stations].” According to Sandra, “Puerto Rican culture is very rich” and should be upheld abroad. She referred specifically to Three Kings Day, *aguinaldos* (Christmas carols), folk arts, painting, and music.

Like Sandra, Angel responded that he was “100 percent Puerto Rican,” but that you have to be part of the “Hispanic umbrella.” In his office, he displays the flags of Puerto Rico, the United States, Murcia (Spain), the Canary Islands, Italy, Florida, and Ohio. For him, “being Puerto Rican is something different. There’s a passion, a love for the Island.” Angel talked about a “clash of mentality” between Puerto Ricans, who prefer to speak Spanish, and third- and fourth-generation Cubans, who are supposedly more “assimilated” to American culture. “If I’m talking with other Hispanics,” Angel said, “there’s always the pride of being Puerto Rican. Still, I have very cordial relations with Cubans. We support each other.” He also pointed out that Colombians have become well integrated with Puerto Ricans in the Catholic Church, to which he belongs. Angel has witnessed the growing significance of Orlando’s Hispanic community, which he believed had “a more profound spirituality” than Americans, as expressed in more “excited music and devotions.”

ANGEL TALKED ABOUT A “CLASH OF MENTALITY” BETWEEN PUERTO RICANS, WHO PREFER TO SPEAK SPANISH, AND THIRD- AND FOURTH-GENERATION CUBANS, WHO ARE SUPPOSEDLY MORE “ASSIMILATED” TO AMERICAN CULTURE.

“I’m Puerto Rican above all,” said Luisa. “But I’d like Puerto Ricans to be more tolerant toward other Hispanics, such as Mexicans, Colombians, and Venezuelans.” In Orlando, she said, Puerto Ricans and Cubans do not interact as frequently as in other Florida cities like Tampa. “It’s as if this [Orlando] were our property.” This comment recalls Eichenberger’s (2004) observation that many Puerto Ricans feel that Central Florida is a symbolic extension of the Island’s culture. This sense of proprietorship often leads to neglecting other Hispanic contributions to the area. According to Luisa, “we’re not making a common front” between Puerto Ricans and Hispanics in Orlando.

Another informant, Miriam, quipped: “When they ask me if I’m Hispanic or Latino, I put Puerto Rican. I don’t feel Hispanic. Not all Hispanics go to war. Mine do.” She was presumably referring to the fact that all Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens by birth. Serving in the U.S. military forces then becomes a sign of civic loyalty, patriotism, and legitimacy. Miriam’s opinion resonates with the distinction made by some Latinos in Miami and Chicago between “deserving” and “undeserving”

immigrants (Aranda et al. 2009; De Genova and Ramos-Zayas 2003). In this case, the legal rights and duties associated with U.S. citizenship set Puerto Ricans apart from other Latin Americans. Moreover, Miriam's comment is also typical of middle-class legal immigrants who often look down on lower-class undocumented immigrants.

When Margarita first arrived in Orlando, she "wasn't connected with the Latino community." "This is the only place where I have faced racism," she noted. At work, she was told that she "wasn't too bad for a Puerto Rican.... They take us too casually. There's no appreciation of our achievements.... There were insults. They looked at us in a strange way. It hasn't been easy." Perhaps as a response, Margarita joined several social, professional, and business groups founded by Puerto Ricans. She defines herself as Puerto Rican and always introduces herself that way in her professional activities. "I have relations with other groups and have been to all the countries of South America," she clarified. "There are clashes, but they have to do more with personality than with philosophy." What does it mean to be Puerto Rican? For Margarita, it means appreciating the Island's art, painting, music, food, and drinks. Toward the end of the interview, she proudly proclaimed that "I have no identity problem" because "Puerto Rico lives in me."

Although his parents were foreign immigrants, Raúl was born in Puerto Rico. He stated emphatically: "I always define myself as Puerto Rican." He has never thought of himself as "Puerto Rican-American." "I feel very, very Puerto Rican," Raúl reiterated. "When I go to Puerto Rico, I feel at home.... Here I feel like in a limbo, as if I were borrowed (*como prestado*)." He has never felt discriminated against, because he "looks like a *gringo*." Raúl's two daughters often ask him, "What am I"? Because his wife is Venezuelan, he tells them that they are "*boricua*-Venezuelan-American." As to other Hispanics, Raúl believed that "each one goes their own way (*cada cual jala pa' su lao*)... they cut each other's heads (*se tumban la cabeza*)." In Raúl's experience, Colombians are "groupies" who "stick together" and Cubans' relations with Puerto Ricans show some tension (*tirantez*). In Orlando, Cubans and Puerto Ricans have separate social clubs. In addition, "other Latin Americans criticize us because of the way we talk." At work, he strives to maintain a "neutral" accent in Spanish.

SEVERAL LIGHT-SKINNED INTERVIEWEES COMMENTED ON THEIR EXPERIENCE OF NOT CONFORMING TO THE "LATIN LOOK" AND THEREBY AVOIDING RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN THE UNITED STATES.

Similarly, Raymond's father is an American of European descent, while his mother was born in New York of Puerto Rican origin. Raymond was born and raised in Puerto Rico, speaks Spanish as his native language, and defines himself as Puerto

Rican. He has often heard the phrase “You don’t look Puerto Rican,” as if all Puerto Ricans had the same physical type. Several light-skinned interviewees commented on their experience of not conforming to the “Latin look” and thereby avoiding racial discrimination in the United States.

“I’m Puerto Rican,” asserted Raquel, “and I also feel Hispanic. I use them as synonyms. But not Latina. I’m not Brazilian,” a group that could be included under the Latino heading. Raquel’s children, born in Puerto Rico but raised in Orlando, feel the same way. When they grew up, they all dated other Hispanics, especially Cubans. In Raquel’s view, the greatest challenge in Puerto Rican-Hispanic relations is that “we’re [U.S.] citizens and other groups resent that, such as Venezuelans.... We can vote and they can’t. It takes them time. [Yet] we as Puerto Ricans fail. We don’t vote.” On the other hand, “the Cuban has had to struggle so much.... They have assimilated better. They have gained more positions than we have.” In contrast, “we [Puerto Ricans] continue our traditions, our roots, such as Three Kings Day. We speak Spanish.” Here Raquel articulated the common perception that Island-born Puerto Ricans stay closer to their Hispanic and Catholic “roots” than other Latin American immigrants.

Ernesto argued that the “Hispanic or Latino” idea is “totally American, it doesn’t exist in Puerto Rico. It’s a sociopolitical concept used for their [Americans] benefit and to distribute funds.” He prefers not to answer Hispanic/Latino on census forms, because people from Latin America have different cultures, dialects, and “races.” “We’re not colored.... We’re multicolored,” he insisted. Moreover, Ernesto resented that Cubans “control the economy and politics” in Florida because many came from “moneyed families.” Lately, “many Venezuelans are arriving with a lot of money.” In his experience, both Cubans and Venezuelans often disparage Puerto Ricans (*les tiran a los puertorriqueños*). In his words, Cubans “took over” the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in Orlando, so Puerto Ricans had to form their own chamber. (The current president of the Hispanic Chamber is Venezuelan.) Ernesto said he has experienced racism, both by “Anglos” and “other Hispanics,” because of his dark skin color, although he identified himself as white in the census.

Hispanic or Latino

For some respondents, like Diana, being Hispanic, Latino, and Puerto Rican “represents the same thing.” Still, Diana felt Hispanic (not Latina) and “above all Puerto Rican.” Although Alberto’s primary identity is Puerto Rican, being Latino or Hispanic is also “OK” with him. Puerto Rico is “a beautiful little island in the Caribbean,” he added. “The term Latino unites us (*nos hermana*) with other Spanish-speaking people, such as Cubans, Colombians, and Dominicans.”

Given the choice between Latino and Puerto Rican, most of my informants prefer the latter. The supranational sense of *Latinidad* is much weaker than their emotional attachment to *puertorriqueñidad*. Contrary to other parts of the United States, Puerto Ricans in Orlando rarely use the term “Latino.” “Hispanic” is more common, but lacks a strong emotional appeal for most participants in this study. Perhaps this is because most of my informants recognize the cultural differences as well as the similarities between various groups of Latin American immigrants. According to a Venezuelan businessman in Orlando, “one of our main challenges as Hispanics is the integration of different cultural traditions.”

Only one of my respondents felt more Hispanic/Latino than Puerto Rican. “I was born there [on the Island],” said Manuel, “and I’m very proud of it.

But when I'm defining myself, I emphasize the Latino root." When he moved as a child to the United States, first to Miami and then to Orlando, Manuel experienced an "identity crisis," as a result of the "clash" with other Hispanic students, such as Cubans and Colombians. He had always felt a special affinity with Cubans, even before leaving San Juan, where many of his teachers and fellow students were Cuban. He often went to Casa Cuba, a social club in Isla Verde, with his Cuban friends. "The Cubans from here [Orlando] have made me an adoptive son of Cuba," he stated. He keeps in touch with Cuban and Colombian friends in Miami. For Manuel, a devout Catholic, the Church must be aware of cultural differences, such as food preferences and popular devotions, among Hispanic parishioners. He has observed some tensions among Hispanics, notably "Cuban resistance" to mingling with other groups. By and large there is a "contagion of identity" between various Hispanic groups in Orlando, including Puerto Ricans, Colombians, and Venezuelans. According to Manuel, they all seek to "maintain their [Hispanic] roots." In Ernesto's view, the Church plays a "very important role" in recreating a "community of faith" among Hispanics (see Eichenberger 2004).

BY AND LARGE THERE IS A "CONTAGION OF IDENTITY" BETWEEN VARIOUS HISPANIC GROUPS IN ORLANDO, INCLUDING PUERTO RICANS, COLOMBIANS, AND VENEZUELANS.

According to María, who was born and raised in New York, your identity does not come "from where you were born, but from the blood you have inside." As a girl, she returned to Puerto Rico with her family. Because she did not speak Spanish then, they would tell her "gringa, go home." Her parents eventually returned to the United States, specifically to Tampa. There she was told to "go back to Puerto Rico." So she faced much ignorance and prejudice, both on the Island and in the mainland. "There's discrimination [against Hispanics] and there always will be," she acknowledged. But "we haven't let discrimination stop us" from advancing in the United States. Throughout our conversation, María often used the term "Hispanic" rather than "Latino" to refer to herself and others. She never calls herself "Puerto Rican-American," because she thinks it is redundant. No other respondents chose this hyphenated expression to describe themselves.

American

Only one of my informants, Jorge, identified himself as "American first." But he also recognized he was Puerto Rican by culture and Hispanic by language. He considered himself "a white Hispanic with an Anglo personality." By the latter, Jorge meant a more easygoing lifestyle, adaptation to stateside experiences, and English language fluency. Compared to Orlando, Puerto Rico has "a more hectic lifestyle, is more

crowded and busy.” Jorge was also the only one who preferred to conduct the interview in English. He grew up in a military base near San Juan, because his father was enrolled in the U.S. Army, and he had many “Anglo” friends. As a child, he switched between speaking Spanish at home and English in school.

After moving to the mainland, Jorge married a “tenth-generation” Mexican American and became increasingly “bicultural.” At home they celebrate both American and Hispanic traditions, such as during Christmas (but not Three Kings Day, he noted). Jorge said he had “never [witnessed] any rift” in Latino/Puerto Rican relations. But he acknowledged that “traditionally, there has been a butting of heads” among Hispanics and that Puerto Ricans often told “jokes about Cubans. Some Cubans have a chip on their shoulder. They don’t have a country to go back to.” He has never experienced discrimination as a Hispanic because he does not “look the part.”

According to my respondents, some of their children, who had grown up in the United States, feel American. Many do not speak Spanish well and have never been to Puerto Rico. Some have married Americans. But others feel Puerto Rican, like Clarita’s granddaughter, who keeps in touch with her cousins on the Island. A few second-generation Puerto Ricans belong to Hispanic gangs in Orlando, Angel noted. But most do not consider themselves either black or white, according to U.S. racial terminology. This in-between status of second- and third-generation Puerto Ricans has been examined elsewhere (see Pérez 2004; Toro-Morn and Alicea 2003; Zentella 2003).

IN MY INTERVIEWS, ISLAND-BORN PUERTO RICANS WERE AT PAINS TO DISTINGUISH THEMSELVES FROM NUYORICANS.

Nuyorican

None of the interviewees defined themselves as Nuyoricans, an epithet applied by Island-born Puerto Ricans to all U.S.-born residents of Puerto Rican ancestry, regardless of their place of residence. The term usually evokes an ill-mannered youth who speaks Spanish poorly, dresses inappropriately, and does not respect traditional rules of conduct in Puerto Rico. This label stigmatizes return migrants and their children as more Americanized and less “authentic” Puerto Ricans than those who were raised on the Island. The perceived divisions between Island-born Puerto Ricans and the so-called Nuyoricans have been well documented, both in Puerto Rico and the United States (Lorenzo-Hernández 1999; Pérez 2004; Ramos-Zayas 2003; Sánchez 2009; Zentella 2003). Moreover, middle-class Puerto Ricans often express negative attitudes toward Nuyoricans, usually perceived as less educated and skilled than those coming from the Island. Even Miriam, who spent much of her childhood in New York, did not describe herself as a Nuyorican. When that term came up in our conversations, it always alluded to others, not to the respondents’ self-classification.

In my interviews, Island-born Puerto Ricans were at pains to distinguish themselves from Nuyoricans. For instance, Sandra noted the basic linguistic contrast between Puerto Ricans raised “here and there.” By and large, second-generation Puerto Ricans prefer to speak English, while islanders favor Spanish. The Spanish/

English language dichotomy overlaps with other social, economic, and cultural differences. According to Raúl, islanders “talk in derogatory terms about them [Nuyoricans]. They speak differently from us [Puerto Ricans from the Island].” Still, Diana noted that “they speak English, but they think like Puerto Ricans. They eat rice and beans and dance salsa.” Manuel’s mother, who was raised in New York, traveled back to the Island when she was 17 years old and “she fell in love with Puerto Rico.” But her father shunned her as a “Nuyorican.”

Most of my informants would disagree with Alberto’s dictum that “there’s no conflict with Nuyoricans” in Orlando. For Jorge, Nuyoricans are more “brass” and “assimilated” than those who come directly from Puerto Rico. “It’s a very different community... though we share the same culture, language, and experience.” According to Raquel, “they behave differently, they have a different way of dressing, they’re aggressive in the way they speak.” For Ernesto, Nuyoricans are also “more aggressive” than Puerto Ricans from the Island; they often act “in your face.” In his view, “Puerto Ricans in New York already had their struggle [to survive]... and they didn’t triumph.” With Puerto Ricans from Chicago, “you have to be careful.” Ernesto implied that they were somehow more “dangerous” and prone to crime than those coming from the Island. “They have a certain idiosyncrasy,” according to Clarita. “There are clashes” with Island-born immigrants. Raquel summed up the main point: “For Anglo-Saxons, all Puerto Ricans are the same [as Nuyoricans]. Those from here [the United States] don’t get along well with those from there [Puerto Rico].”

IN ERNESTO’S VIEW, “PUERTO RICANS IN NEW YORK ALREADY HAD THEIR STRUGGLE [TO SURVIVE]... AND THEY DIDN’T TRIUMPH.”

Most of my informants, then, identified primarily as Puerto Rican and secondarily as Hispanic or Latino. For many, relations with other Latin American immigrants were conflict-ridden, although some had Cuban, Venezuelan, Mexican, and Argentinean friends and spouses. Middle-class Puerto Ricans in Orlando resisted being “assimilated” into mainstream American culture as well as being classified as a racial minority, together with other people of Latin American ancestry. They insisted on calling themselves Puerto Rican, rather than Nuyorican, Puerto Rican-American, or any other hyphenated expression. They tended to view “Hispanic” and “Latino” as externally imposed, problematic, and psychologically distant terms of reference. Their self-perception was still largely anchored in an Island-centered culture, not in the U.S. mainland. As Ana Yolanda Ramos-Zayas (2003: 148) notes for Puerto Ricans in Chicago, “the Island invariably remained a geographical referent of cultural authenticity and a driving force in nostalgic narratives and imagery.”

Conclusion

In this article, I have probed how middle-class members of the Puerto Rican community in Orlando articulate the overlapping discourses of Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Latino identities. As transnational colonial migrants who share the benefits of U.S. citizenship and consider themselves “white,” most of my interviewees maintained a distance from other Latin American immigrants. They tended to mistrust the catchall category of *Latinidad* or *Hispanidad*, which treats people from Latin America as a single collectivity. Instead, many expressed a strong commitment to “long-distance nationalism”—to borrow Benedict Anderson’s (2001) expression—“a nationalism that no longer depends as it once did on territorial location in a home country.” This sense of loyalty relies primarily on continuing cultural, political, and emotional connections across borders (though not always state boundaries) (see also Aranda 2007; Pérez 2004; Ramos-Zayas 2003; Toro-Morn and Alicea 2003). Because most respondents were born and raised on the Island, they spoke Spanish and practiced Puerto Rican customs at home. They belonged to numerous Puerto Rican and Hispanic associations and cultivated kinship and friendship ties to the Island. Many traveled regularly between Orlando and San Juan. Some still owned property in Puerto Rico. A few hoped to retire on the Island.

THE DEMOGRAPHIC AND CULTURAL PREDOMINANCE OF PUERTO RICANS IN CENTRAL FLORIDA HAS ENCOURAGED THEIR MOBILIZATION PRIMARILY AROUND NATIONAL ORIGIN, NOT MULTIETHNIC COALITIONS.

My informants’ middle-class backgrounds, as well as their light skin color, shielded them from the intense prejudice, discrimination, and segregation experienced by lower-class, dark-skinned immigrants in the United States. For instance, the respondents’ higher education, occupational status, and residential patterns tended to expose them constantly to Anglos on an equal footing in their business, political, recreational, and social lives. In addition, a recurrent theme in the interviews was that many did not conform to the “Latin look” and therefore could avoid negative images based on physical appearance. Only three of the 16 respondents had openly faced racial discrimination in Orlando. In turn, most resisted being racialized as Hispanics or Latinos. This study has found little evidence for the downward “segmented assimilation” (Portes and Zhou 1993) of middle-class Puerto Ricans in Orlando, who typically do not regard themselves as Latinos, Hispanics, or “people of color.” Instead, my interviews documented a tightly knit transnational community that holds onto its own values and customs, but has experienced substantial upward social mobility. Still, many of my informants recognized the cultural, religious, and linguistic affinities between Puerto Ricans and other Hispanics.

The demographic and cultural predominance of Puerto Ricans in Central Florida has encouraged their mobilization primarily around national origin, not multiethnic coalitions. On some occasions, Puerto Ricans make common cause with Cubans, Venezuelans, Mexicans, and other Latin American immigrants, such as electing a candidate or supporting bilingual education. Some belong to voluntary associations that promote the welfare of the “Hispanic community”—but in practice most of these groups’ members and leaders are of Puerto Rican origin. By and large, Orlando’s prominent Puerto Ricans cling to their national origins, cultural traditions, and transnational connections. Their transnational identities are firmly anchored in long-distance kinship and friendship networks with the Island.

How do representatives of the Puerto Rican middle class in Orlando define their identity? Their main criteria are birthplace, family background, language, religion, and other cultural practices such as cuisine, music, and folk arts, especially those related to Christmas festivities. (My informants frequently singled out Three Kings Day as a key symbol of Puerto Ricanness.) This group of relatively privileged immigrants was predominantly born and raised on the Island, has many relatives back home, speaks Spanish, attends the Catholic Church, and cherishes the homeland. Its members usually measure the cultural “authenticity” of Puerto Rican identity by how well one speaks the Island’s vernacular, plays dominoes, or dances salsa. Another common token of *puertorriqueñidad* is eating traditional foods like *arroz con gandules* (rice and pigeon peas), green plantains, and fried pork. Although this form of “symbolic ethnicity” may seem superficial or even trivial, it helps to sustain many immigrants’ sense of home away from their homeland.

In addition, an often implicit but crucial series of boundaries are constructed around class and race. Because of their middle-class character, most interviewees were white in physical appearance—although some might not “pass” as such according to U.S. racial categories. The selective class and racial background of recent Puerto Rican immigrants in Orlando might put them at odds with their less fortunate compatriots, especially those who come from other parts of the U.S. mainland, who tend to be poorer and darker-skinned than those arriving directly from the Island. Second-generation immigrants usually speak English more fluently than Spanish and may have little personal knowledge of Puerto Rican culture on the Island. The growing gap between islanders and the so-called Nuyoricans deserves more systematic research, especially in connection with class and race fissures. The question of who can legitimately claim to be Puerto Rican hangs in the balance.

In the United States, the physical appearance and cultural practices of Latinos have been racialized. The dominant image of a “Latin look” draws on age-old stereotypes of swarthy people of mongrel races. The Spanish language, Catholic religion, and extended family are often taken as essentialized markers of *Latinidad*. Moreover, carving a motley category out of different national and ethnic groups is partly based on the lingering belief that Spanish-speaking people are racially mixed and culturally inferior to Anglo-Saxons. Although the Census Bureau officially recognizes that “Hispanics can be of any race,” it tends to treat them apart from non-Hispanic whites and blacks. Similarly, the mass media, the police, and other U.S. institutions reproduce the popular notion that Hispanics are distinct from other “races,” such as African Americans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans. Allegiance to *Latinidad*, beyond the immigrants’ national and ethnic identities, is still emergent, uneven, disputed, and regionally specific. Some people of Latin American origin have embraced a broader category to advance their collective

plight as a racialized minority in the United States. Others, like the middle-class Puerto Ricans in Orlando who participated in this study, usually reject the panethnic label. At this point, a generic Latino or Hispanic identity rarely overrides specific national markers such as Puerto Rican.

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NOTES

¹ According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2009b), “the terms ‘Hispanic’ or ‘Latino’ refer to persons who trace their origin or descent to Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Spanish speaking Central and South America countries, and other Spanish cultures.”

² The literature on middle-class Puerto Rican migrants is scanty. Virginia Sánchez Korrol (1994) has provided historical evidence of its presence among Puerto Ricans in New York City during the first half of the twentieth century. Maura Toro-Morn (1995) interviewed middle-class Puerto Rican women in Chicago. For more recent studies, see Aranda (2007, 2009) and Ramos-Zayas (2003), especially chapter 5.

³ In 2008, Patricia Silver and Natalie Underberg initiated the oral history project, “Puerto Ricans, 1940s to 1980s: A History,” at the University of Central Florida. For more information, see the project’s website: <<http://www.prcf.info/>>.

⁴ In 1947, the Puerto Rican government launched “Operation Bootstrap,” an industrialization program based on luring U.S. investment through tax exemption for manufacturing enterprises. The same year, the Puerto Rican government created the Employment and Migration Bureau (later renamed Migration Division) of the Labor Department, which sought “to follow its migrant citizens to facilitate their adjustment” to the U.S. mainland. For more details on the Migration Division as a “transnational” agency, see Duany (2002), especially chapter 7.

⁵ For a useful discussion of the concept of “borderlands” in the Mexican American case, see Saldívar (1997).

⁶ Although I did not inquire specifically about my informants’ residential locations, other researchers have found that middle-class Puerto Ricans tend to live in relatively affluent and dispersed suburban neighborhoods, away from the main enclaves in the city of Orlando, Kissimmee, and Poinciana (Concepción Torres 2008; Sánchez 2009).

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