

END-OF-THE-CENTURY STUDIES OF PUERTO
RICO'S ECONOMY, POLITICS, AND
CULTURE:
What Lies Ahead?

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- CUBANS IN PUERTO RICO: ETHNIC ECONOMY AND CULTURAL IDENTITY.* By José A. Cobas and Jorge Duany. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997. Pp. 156. \$49.95 cloth.)
- THE DISENCHANTED ISLAND: PUERTO RICO AND THE UNITED STATES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.* Second edition. By Ronald Fernandez. Foreword by William M. Kunstle and Ronald L. Kuby. (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1996. Pp. 278. \$65.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.)
- ISLAND PARADOX: PUERTO RICO IN THE 1990s.* By Francisco Rivera-Batiz and Carlos E. Santiago. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1996. Pp. 198. \$39.95 cloth, \$16.95 paper.)
- KICKING OFF THE BOOTSTRAPS: ENVIRONMENT, DEVELOPMENT, AND COMMUNITY POWER IN PUERTO RICO.* By Deborah Berman Santana. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996. Pp. 211. \$39.95 cloth.)
- POVERTY AND INCOME INEQUALITY IN PUERTO RICO, 1970-1990.* By Orlando J. Sotomayor. (Río Piedras, P.R.: Centro de Investigaciones Sociales, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1998. Pp. 125. \$10.00 paper.)
- PUERTO RICAN JAM: ESSAYS ON CULTURE AND POLITICS.* Edited by Frances Negrón-Muntaner and Ramón Grosfoguel. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, Pp. 303. \$49.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.)
- PUERTO RICO: CULTURE, POLITICS, AND IDENTITY.* By Nancy Morris. (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1995. Pp. 224. \$57.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.)
- TEODORO MOSCOSO AND PUERTO RICO'S OPERATION BOOTSTRAP.* By Alex W. Maldonado. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997. Pp. 262. \$49.95 cloth.)

Notions such as “turn of the century” and the more impressive “new millennium” are human constructs that have no meaning in themselves. Yet once articulated, the process of reification makes them appear to be autonomous turning points, as objectified landmarks that designate critical

points. Bearing this thought in mind, I approached reading this sample of end-of-the-twentieth-century studies on Puerto Rico by asking myself what the present and future generations of readers will identify as the axes of the scholarly debate on Puerto Rican social sciences at this imagined critical juncture.

It would be reasonable for readers of these eight books to conclude that three subjects dominate and even obsess social scientists in Puerto Rican studies: Operation Bootstrap,¹ the question of political status, and issues of culture and identity. I am classifying culture and identity as a single subject, as do most of the Puerto Rican works on these topics. A perfunctory look at the bibliography on social science works on Puerto Rico published in English in the 1980s and 1990s reveals substantial biases favoring these themes (see the list of references). They represent “the big questions” in Puerto Rican social science research since the end of World War II.

A keen and informed researcher might also notice that these axes of the big-question research agenda were set by the studies on Puerto Rico produced by U.S. social scientists in the 1950s and 1960s (Lauria-Pericelli 1989). During that golden era of Operation Bootstrap, Puerto Rico was presented as a successful experiment in economic and political development by most mainstream U.S. economists, political scientists, sociologists, and anthropologists. For example, political scientist Henry Wells held up Puerto Rico as *the* example of successful modernization in the era of the Alliance for Progress (Wells 1969). Under the direction of U.S. scholars like Clarence Senior and Millard Hansen, the Centro de Investigaciones Sociales at the University of Puerto Rico became a laboratory for U.S. social sciences (Lauria-Pericelli 1989). In political circles, Puerto Rico was often referred to as a showcase for Latin America (Maldonado-Denis 1969, 360). U.S. mainstream social sciences in the 1950s and 1960s thus appeared to be legitimizing and shaping the political project of modern and enlightened colonialism advanced by the Partido Popular Democrático (PPD). This observation is not meant to say that all research done by U.S. social scientists was actually a tool of legitimation of the PPD’s political project. Many important figures in the U.S. social sciences began their work in Puerto Rico and could hardly be cast as apologists of modern colonialism. Sydney Mintz and Eric Wolf come to mind, among others.

Since the 1970s, a new generation of Puerto Rican scholars has set forth an agenda for sociohistoric research anchored in questioning mainstream U.S. views of the Puerto Rican economy and society. This new agenda was established in Puerto Rico by the Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Puertorriqueña (CEREP) and in the United States by the Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños (El Centro) at Hunter College of the City Uni-

1. Operation Bootstrap refers to the Puerto Rican government’s postwar industrial-development policy.

versity of New York. The history of workers became the new axis of Puerto Rican social sciences and historiography in order to provide an alternative interpretation of Puerto Rico's history, polity, economy, society, and culture.

It is ironic that a quarter of a century after such a crucial turn in the research focus of the major Puerto Rican social science and history research centers, the axes of big-question research remain trapped in the discursive parameters set by the U.S. social sciences in the 1950s and 1960s. The books examined here, excepting those by Cobas and Duany and by Sotomayor, are still operating on the discursive terrain of Operation Bootstrap and the PPD modernity project, albeit often in the form of counterdiscourses.

Bootstrap Forever?

The obsession with Operation Bootstrap is especially apparent in the literature on economic development. In their introduction to *Island Paradox: Puerto Rico in the 1990s*, Francisco Rivera-Batiz and Carlos Santiago set up their arguments to critique the view of Puerto Rico as a so-called showcase of economic development (p. 3), the metaphor of choice of Operation Bootstrap's technocrats. The pervasive influence of the Bootstrap discourse caused Deborah Berman Santana to stray from her inductive perspective on community development in order to legitimize her own study on the "wider" (methodological?) ground that "Operation Bootstrap was the first Third World, export-led industrialization development program and was used as a blueprint for similar programs throughout the world" (p. 26). Hence, one should assume that it is an ideal case study. This statement seems to contradict the implication that her study on community development is couched in terms of going beyond Bootstrap, as implied in the title, *Kicking off the Bootstraps*. The developmentalist discourse of Operation Bootstrap continues to be the dominant one, whether inspiring counterdiscourses on economic development in the form of critiques or new heroic discourses around the mythical (all male) figures of the creators of Operation Bootstrap, as in the case of Alex Maldonado's *Teodoro Moscoso and Puerto Rico's Operation Bootstrap*.

Berman Santana's *Kicking off the Bootstraps: Environment, Development, and Community Power in Puerto Rico* examines the development of community organizations in the southern town of Salinas and their struggle to preserve the environment and create viable economic alternatives to polluting industries that create few jobs. Her study is grounded in a historical account of failed policies of Operation Bootstrap that explains the development of grassroots movements in Salinas as the community's way of expressing discontent with the program (pp. 162–63). She provides an insightful account of the development of community-based organizations, including a useful sociological profile of their leadership and community projects that succeeded and failed.

As a study in “community power,” however, *Kicking off the Bootstraps* falls short of fulfilling its potential. Using a narrative strategy that focuses on Salinas as the unit of analysis rather than on the community organizations discussed makes the study sound at times like a radical analysis of one town’s resistance to corporate interests, à la NACLA. While Berman Santana indicates awareness of the literature on new social movements in Latin America (p. 105), she makes no attempt to compare them with the ones she studied to explain the larger import of this social phenomenon.

Berman Santana’s main contribution is found in the final chapter on sustainable development. Here she moves from reflecting on working peoples’ strategies of resistance and affirmation to developing a critique of traditional development theories and cliché versions of the concept of sustainable development. Berman Santana summarizes the debate over this “new concept” and provides a working definition that encompasses four key issues: human and ecological sustainability; empowerment of the least powerful; applicability to less developed and advanced countries; and sensitivity to local, regional, and global needs (pp. 172–73). Although the connection between “community empowerment” and sustainable development (the “how to”) is not strongly established, the definition proposed is thought-provoking.

Another discussion that makes an interesting critique of the Bootstrap discourse is Jaime Benson’s contribution to *Puerto Rican Jam*, “Puerto Rico: The Myth of a National Economy.” He argues that the Bootstrap model did not lead to the development of a national or autonomous economic space in Puerto Rico. On the contrary, the Puerto Rican economy has been unequally integrated into the U.S. economy and constitutes a differentiated part of it (pp. 77–78). Using the language of the French regulation school, Benson characterizes the Puerto Rican economy as a regional armature of U.S. extensive accumulation and competitive regulation (p. 86).² Yet for all his criticism of the illusions of economic autonomy held by leading economic analysts, Benson suddenly turns into a nationalist in concluding, “I do not need to make the case for greater autonomous development and self-reliance in the transition toward an independent Puerto Rico” (p. 90). He thus truncates an insightful path into analyzing the way that Puerto Rico is linked to the circuits of U.S. transnational capital in the post-Bootstrap, post-Fordist, and postindustrial era.

Island Paradox: Puerto Rico in the 1990s by Rivera-Batiz and Santiago constitutes an empirical critique of the contradictions of Puerto Rico’s development since Operation Bootstrap began in the 1950s. The authors use census data to depict the key socioeconomic and demographic trends of the

2. An armature is literally a piece of iron connecting two poles of a magnet or the connection wires wound around a dynamo. Benson uses the word metaphorically to convey the intermediary role played by some economies in the global circuits of transnational capital.

second half of the twentieth century. They define Operation Bootstrap as one of three stages in the postwar development process (pp. 8–12). But they do not attempt to develop a conceptual framework of Puerto Rico's development model beyond their characterization of "an island paradox." Thus the book remains part of the discourse of disillusionment with the Bootstrap "paradigm." Rivera-Batiz and Santiago seem to straddle the fence between viewing Puerto Rico as a "developing" (national) economy or as "an economic region" of the United States. In certain respects, "Puerto Rico remains a developing economy, more akin to the rest of Latin America than the United States" (p. 17). They compare Puerto Rico with Latin American economies in figures on income and economic growth (pp. 4–5). Yet two pages later, Puerto Rico's crime figures are compared with those of U.S. urban centers (pp. 6–7).

This conceptual ambiguity remains unresolved in *Island Paradox*, leaving readers with an abundance of statistical information showing that Puerto Rico is unevenly developed, behaving at times like an impoverished U.S. city and at other times like "a developing economy" (pp. 39, 104, 160–61, and passim). One wonders whether this paradox resulted from the methodological inconsistencies of the study or from the reality of Puerto Rico's uneven development.

Alex Maldonado's *Teodoro Moscoso and Puerto Rico's Operation Bootstrap* can best be described as a traditional political biography, a heroic narrative of the life of Teodoro Moscoso, the architect of Operation Bootstrap. In Maldonado's view, Moscoso, a pharmacist from an upper-class Republican background (conservative and pro-statehood³), converted to the cause of modernity and social justice preached by Luis Muñoz Marín and the PPD (pp. 9–11). According to this biographer, Moscoso succeeded in almost singlehandedly transforming Puerto Rico into an industrial economy. Yet he failed to replicate this feat in Latin America as the head of the Alliance for Progress (pp. 179–84) and ended his days watching the collapse of Operation Bootstrap (p. 204). But as in any "tall tale," the author manages to maintain an impeccable image of his hero via elegant explanations of adverse circumstances. Maldonado concludes by proclaiming that the era of Operation Bootstrap ended in 1992 with the electoral victory of the Partido Nuevo Progresista, the PNP (p. 229).

In my view, Operation Bootstrap was a specific economic strategy of export-led industrialization, a development program of "industrialization by invitation." This program ended with the enactment of Section 936 of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code in 1976 and the Puerto Rico Industrial Incentives Act in 1978. These pieces of legislation shifted Puerto Rico's comparative advantage toward financial activities. As a result of Section 936,

3. The pro-statehood movement proposes the annexation of Puerto Rico as a state of the United States.

the island became primarily a tax haven for U.S. transnational corporations (TNCs), especially high-tech and knowledge-intensive companies. Moreover, the capital accumulated from the tax-free "936 deposits" of U.S. TNCs promoted development of the island as a regional financial center. In the 1990s, U.S. capital was "exported" from banks in Puerto Rico to finance investment in other Caribbean countries. This is what I call "the high-finance strategy" that ushered in the development of Puerto Rico as a peripheral postindustrial economy: a service-led economy in which vertically integrated segments of financial and service activities linked to transnational circuits of capital become the dynamic sector of the economy (Pantojas-García 1990, 153–73).

The Operation Bootstrap "paradigm" needs to be superseded. Puerto Rico's economy is neither that of an independent nation-state nor simply that of a region of the United States. The economic structure and problems facing the Puerto Rican economy are not those of manufacturing export platforms like the Philippines or the Dominican Republic, nor are they the same as those of the U.S. Northeast. The emerging issues of economic development in Puerto Rico reflect a peripheral postindustrial economy that serves as a hub in the TNCs' global financial and service circuits. The socioeconomic problems of Puerto Rico resemble both those of urban centers in advanced countries and those of newly industrialized countries or middle-income countries. Yet Puerto Rico is not one or the other. The Puerto Rican economy serves as an armature of U.S. transnational capital (not of "the U.S. economy," as Benson argues) or a link in a vertically integrated chain of transnational production and exchange (Pantojas-García 1990, 172). The Puerto Rican experience has been one of uneven development of a small open economy integrated into the circuits of production and exchange of an advanced economy or a metropolitan center (the United States). In many respects, the Puerto Rican experience can be said to have anticipated the dynamics of the economic spaces likely to emerge from the current wave of free-trade agreements. As these transnationalized economic spaces created by free-trade agreements become the norm, Puerto Rico's uneven development will appear as neither paradoxical nor unique. If they develop as envisaged, they will create economic spaces that will exhibit contradictions similar to those experienced in Puerto Rico in the second half of the twentieth century, along with unforeseen ones. Such are the contradictions of the emerging globalized or transnationalized postindustrial, post-Fordist, high-tech, or knowledge-based economic structure.

What economic studies on Puerto Rico need is to develop a perspective informed by a theory of transnational capital, whether the theories of the French regulation school, neoliberalism, or those of uneven development (such as the core-periphery perspective). At the macro level, the role of Puerto Rico in the transnational economy needs to be explained. Once it

is appropriately understood, then the dynamics of the Puerto Rican economy can be explained in a perspective that will allow for comparisons and will demystify apparent paradoxes.

Identity, Culture, and Politics

The politico-cultural base of Operation Bootstrap was the political formula called commonwealth, a modern colonial status that would allow a degree of local autonomy framed by a local constitution while maintaining U.S. sovereignty over the island. Although this “new status” was presented in 1952 as a measure of self-determination, the political reality of colonialism was evidenced by the ongoing debate over Puerto Rico’s “final” political status as either a state of the Union or an independent nation. The Puerto Rican “national question” became closely linked with the notion of cultural affirmation. For Puerto Ricans, to become one of the United States was to assimilate into “the American way,” to lose the Puerto Rican “national identity.” Thus the only way to preserve Puerto Rican identity was through independence. Although the PPD leadership argued that commonwealth status could guarantee cultural sovereignty, preservation of Puerto Rican culture and identity after 1952 became identified with the pro-independence intellectual elite (Duany 1998, 218–19).

Ronald Fernandez’s *The Disenchanted Island: Puerto Rico and the United States in the Twentieth Century* fits into this marriage between pro-independence politics and the affirmation of Puerto Rican identity and culture. Fernandez, who is of Spanish descent but not Puerto Rican, has become a leading expert on the Puerto Rican struggle for independence. He has written two other books, one on Los Macheteros (1987), an armed clandestine Puerto Rican pro-independence group, and the other on Puerto Rican political prisoners (1994). *The Disenchanted Island* is a well-written sociohistoric interpretation of relations between Puerto Rico and the United States in the twentieth century. The underlying thesis holds that the U.S. political establishment has mistreated Puerto Rico, denying Puerto Ricans as a nation the right to exercise true self-determination by means of political treachery, military force, or the threat of it.

Fernandez has become the chronicler of the Puerto Rican radical Left in the United States. His mainstream rhetoric and commonsense liberal approach make his book appealing to average U.S. readers. He weaves a seamless narrative in *The Disenchanted Island* of the ongoing unfairness of U.S. politicians toward Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans from the U.S. invasion in 1898 to the 1993 plebiscite.

Nancy Morris’s *Puerto Rico: Culture, Politics, and Identity* provides a different perspective on the study of national identity. She takes an inductive approach in examining U.S.–Puerto Rico relations in order to establish

the connections among culture, politics, and identity. Morris explains that she chose to study Puerto Rico because “of the predominance of identity issues in its recent history” (p. 1).

In discussing her findings drawn from interviews with leaders of the three main political parties as well as focus groups, Morris comes to two main conclusions. First, a consensus exists among Puerto Ricans of all political parties, including the political elite, in viewing Puerto Rico as a distinct people or nation with unique cultural traits (p. 70). Second, “Far from destroying Puerto Rico’s national identity, the import of U.S. culture has strengthened the sense of Puerto Ricanness by providing a counter example of what Puerto Ricanness is not” (p. 152). Her view that Puerto Rican political elites articulate ideas of national identity regardless of which of the three political alternatives they favor (commonwealth, independence, or statehood) represents a new idea in Puerto Rican cultural studies (pp. 2, 169). Morris’s study demonstrates empirically that in the 1990s, constructions of Puerto Rican national identity are not mechanically subordinated to preferences regarding political status.

Nowhere is this new tendency to detach Puerto Rican identity from nationalism more evident than in the volume edited by Frances Negrón-Muntaner and Ramón Grosfoguel, *Puerto Rican Jam: Essays on Culture and Politics*. This collection of essays was born of disaffection from mainstream nationalist and colonialist discourses by island-born and diaspora Puerto Rican academics. It presents multiple narratives of countercultural experiences that do not fit into the nationalist representations of Puerto Ricanness and seek to transcend them (p. 2). In a clear break with traditional studies of Puerto Rican culture, the dominant view of this collection of essays is that nationalism is a conservative if not reactionary social force that does not constitute a forward-looking alternative for understanding and explaining Puerto Ricanness.

The many contributors to this anthology represent the full spectrum of the Puerto Rican experience. The book is indeed a jam in the jazz sense, a polyrhythmic piece in which each solo follows no predetermined pattern. The essays range from mainstream historiography and anthropology (Mariano Negrón-Portillo and Arlene Dávila) to analyses informed by post-structuralism (Yolanda Martínez San Miguel), postmodernism (Agustín Lao), and queer theory (Manuel Guzmán). All the contributors, however, share to varying degrees the disillusionment and disaffection with mainstream and essentialist meta-narratives on Puerto Ricanness, which they perceive as authoritarian and exclusionary. Puerto Ricanness is thus redefined by implication as all that Puerto Ricans think and do wherever they are (see Alberto Sandoval Sánchez, p. 205).

Puerto Rican Jam is a provocative collection. The critiques of traditional discourses and the proposition of postnationalist alternative dis-

courses, while sometimes half-baked, anticipate some of the emerging themes in social analysis for the twenty-first century: sexuality, transnationality, transmigration and transnational identities, and the impact of AIDS.

Reading these books on culture and identity reminded me of Angel Rama's definition of identity as a reactive category. Identity is defined by those issues that, in the words of Louis Althusser, interpellate us in a given context. Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Cubans all make racist jokes about each other. But when members of these groups feel discriminated against in the United States, they rally around the construct of a Latino or Hispanic identity to forge political alliances based on imagined shared cultures and identities.

A keen observer of Puerto Rican quotidian life, however, would conclude that the average Puerto Rican does not share the obsession of the political and intellectual elites with defining the Puerto Rican identity. I agree with Nancy Morris that there is a basic consensus as to what constitutes Puerto Rican identity. Spanish is indeed the Puerto Rican vernacular, although English and Spanglish are also part of daily life in Puerto Rico. A recognizable Puerto Rican literature also exists, as illustrated by the campaign to nominate writer Enrique Laguerre for the Nobel Prize. But identity is defined primarily in lived relations and in opposition to what Puerto Ricans are not.

In the final baseball game of the 1999 Caribbean Series in San Juan, Puerto Rican fans chanted, "Yo soy boricua pa' que tú lo sepas" (I am Puerto Rican, so now you know it), affirming Puerto Ricanness vis-à-vis the Dominican opponents and their supporters seated among Puerto Ricans on the opposite side of the stadium. Present at this event were the pro-statehood governor, the pro-commonwealth mayor of San Juan, and a pro-independence former gubernatorial candidate. The meaning of this chant in terms of cultural politics can be debated. It clearly was not an act of political resistance to "Yankee imperialism," but it probably represented for nationalists a statement of national pride and affirmation. For others, this chant may have represented a xenophobic affirmation opposing the largest and most visible migrant community in Puerto Rico. But for many, it may have been only a show of support for "our" local or national team.

As an arena of political contestation, the issue of culture and national identity (of Puerto Ricanness) will continue to kindle passionate arguments among Puerto Rican intellectual and political elites. But as a rule, the average Puerto Rican living on the island is not agonizing over who or what he or she is culturally.⁴ It seems clear, as these books indicate, that the

4. The front page of *El Nuevo Día* of 25 August 1998 reported a poll in which crime and personal security, drug abuse, the AIDS epidemic, unemployment, and health services were of far more concern to Puerto Ricans than the status question or issues of culture and identity.

paradigm of cultural politics is changing rapidly from essentialist and reductionist nationalism to relativist postmodernism and poststructuralism.

Small-Question Research: Two Empirical Studies

Small-question research is concerned with empirical aspects of wider theoretical research questions.⁵ As noted, Puerto Rican social scientists have been big on “big-question research.” Empirical studies on specialized subjects are generally conducted by private consulting firms, government agencies, and graduate students writing dissertations. This said, the two works by José Cobas and Jorge Duany and by Orlando Sotomayor are examples of excellent academic research on small questions. These theoretically grounded pieces of research investigate particular research questions and units of analysis.

Cobas and Duany’s *Cubans in Puerto Rico: Ethnic Economy and Cultural Identity* analyzes middleman groups, using as models earlier studies of the Jewish diaspora in Europe conducted by Max Weber and Georg Simmel (p. 9). The authors argue, however, that the middleman group model developed in the classics and adopted in later studies of middleman groups in the United States is inadequate for explaining the role and development of modern middleman groups (pp. 14–20). After pondering other alternatives, such as the ethnic enclave model developed by Alejandro Portes and Robert Manning (1986), Cobas and Duany develop a modified explanation of middleman groups by advancing a set of explanatory propositions rather than an abstract ideal model (p. 20).

Cobas and Duany confirm that Cubans in Puerto Rico indeed constitute a middleman group (p. 65). Cubans dominate some business lines, playing an intermediary economic role in the host society, and they enjoy higher levels of income, education, and occupation than do Puerto Ricans. Cubans must confront antagonism in their host society, but they diverge from classic middleman groups in that they share the language and religion of the host society. This congruence allows for high rates of marriage between Cubans and Puerto Ricans and thereby reduces clannishness and estrangement from the host society (pp. 66, 126–27). The older generation of Cuban migrants exhibit more encapsulation and clannishness (p. 76). Cobas and Duany conclude that Cubans are therefore transitory middlemen and, like Quakers and Scots were in the United States, are likely to integrate into Puerto Rican society (p. 128).

Orlando Sotomayor’s main concern in *Poverty and Income Inequality in Puerto Rico, 1970–1990* is finding adequate quantitative methods to measure poverty and income inequality that can offer a reliable empirical tool

5. I have taken this concept from James Dietz, who called it “little-question research” (1992, 28–30).

for evaluating explanations of the structure and causes of these phenomena in Puerto Rico. Sotomayor uses the methods and techniques of mainstream economics, such as the Sen index, the FGT family of indices, the mean logarithmic deviation (MLD) index, and the Lorenz curve.

Non-economists who plow through *Poverty and Income Inequality in Puerto Rico* will learn that income inequality in Puerto Rico is steeper than in the United States. The income share of the bottom fifth of the population between 1970 and 1990 averaged less than 2 percent of the national total, while the top fifth accounted for nearly 55 percent of it (p. 118). Poverty is greater in rural areas (p. 33) and among workers in agriculture, construction, and personal services and the unemployed (pp. 26–27). Unemployment or what Sotomayor calls “lack of economic activity” causes more poverty than low wages (pp. 30–31). The increase in female-headed households accounts for more poverty among this group (p. 31). Poverty actually decreased during the 1970s and 1980s (pp. 46, 50), due to “a continuing rise in the amount of transfer payments from the Federal Treasury to the non-working population” (p. 71). Yet despite the huge gap between the rich and the poor in Puerto Rico, income inequalities decreased in the 1970s and 1980s due to a continuing rise in federal transfer payments (p. 117).

These two volumes of small-question research are not the only ones that make empirical contributions. The works of Morris, Rivera-Batiz and Santiago, and Santana also contribute important empirical data. Yet this type of research provides original and often unique data on particular issues as well as new ways of interpreting data by privileging an inductive perspective. For example, Jorge Duany’s research on Dominicans in Puerto Rico shifted the focus of migration studies in the 1980s from Puerto Rican migration to the United States to the study of foreign immigrants to Puerto Rico.

Beyond Bootstrap and Identity Politics: What Lies Ahead

Although many of the authors reviewed here remain stuck in critiquing mainstream discourses of Puerto Rican social sciences, most of their works provide insights into what I envision as the new themes of Puerto Rican social sciences in the years to come. Community empowerment, sustainable strategies of alternative development, and new “localized” entrepreneurial identities are placed on the table for discussion by Deborah Berman Santana. The new dynamics of emigration and immigration are suggested in the studies by José Cobas and Jorge Duany and by Francisco Rivera-Batiz and Carlos Santiago. The growth of transmigrant communities of Cubans, Dominicans, and Haitians as well as Puerto Ricans who are all transcending the notion of a diaspora to become a “translocal” multi-cultural community all anticipate the emergence of a new kind of cultural studies, as exemplified in *Puerto Rican Jam*.

In terms of methodology, the introduction of new ways of using data is also a significant contribution. Following the lead of political scientist Luz del Alba Acevedo (1992, 1993), Rivera-Batiz and Santiago employ the Public Use Micro-data Sample (PUMS) to study the dynamics of the gender gap in earnings (pp. 100–104). Nancy Morris uses effectively interviews with the political elite and focus groups to come up with an inductive definition of Puerto Ricanness. And Cobas and Duany combine census data with their own surveys to produce a detailed profile of the Cuban migrants in Puerto Rico.

Other issues emerging in Puerto Rican politics center around gender and sexuality. Gays and lesbians, who have been harshly discriminated against in Puerto Rican politics, are “coming out of the closet.” For example, the 1996 mayoral race in San Juan consisted of three women candidates, two heterosexuals and an allegedly closet lesbian. The PPD candidate was portrayed as a “supermom,” while the PNP candidate could not use “the family issue” in her favor. Although the PNP won the election by a landslide, the PNP mayoral candidate lost. Was gender preference an issue in this election?

The works reviewed here suggest that Puerto Ricans in the diaspora are more willing to deal with issues of sexuality as an intellectual endeavor. Recent controversies over discrimination against gays and lesbians anticipate that this issue will play a key role in Puerto Rican politics.

Turn-of-the-century political culture is also changing in ways that are sure to impact new research. Until the 1990s, corruption was viewed in Puerto Rico as a Latin American malaise. Third world military regimes and “banana republics” represented the imaginary of political corruption in Puerto Rico. Ongoing revelations of political corruption at all levels of the Puerto Rican political hierarchy will certainly make this subject a compelling research issue in the near future.

The emerging political culture is turning Puerto Rican politics into media events, as is happening in the United States. The current governor has adopted a new style of politics, the politics of entertainment. Pedro Roselló does not make speeches but goes to rallies, dances to popular music that yields “party jingles,” and gives short pep talks. He has become the king of the sound bite. The chorus of the theme song of the 1998 World Cup—“Un, dos, tres / ale, ale, ale / go, go, go / ale, ale, ale”—became the theme song of the December 1998 plebiscite for the PNP because “tres” (three) was the number assigned to the statehood alternative on the ballot. Political campaigns have turned into multimedia presentations à la MTV: dance, stir up the crowd, smile, give a pep talk, move on to the next town. As few debates as possible, no town meetings with small crowds to discuss issues and policies in depth. Instead, endless caravans of cars with huge loudspeakers mounted on pickup trucks, blasting a popular tune while politicians sing and dance.

If the writings reviewed here presage what is to come, I anticipate that research will move in two directions. The first will be a revitalization of small-question research, empirically grounded and theoretically informed. The second will be a new kind of cultural studies led by postnationalist, poststructuralist, and postmodern perspectives. As new issues come to dominate the turn of the twentieth-century economic, social, political, and cultural life, I expect the coming generation of Puerto Rican social scientists to be less concerned with debunking metanarratives of nationalism, developmentalism, identity, and culture and more concerned with studying aspects of everyday life. The quotidian, the microscopic will take precedence over the structural, the macroscopic. Whether this shift will enhance understanding of political, cultural, economic, and social life will depend, as usual, on the quality of the research and the ingenuity of the researchers.

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