Puerto Ricans on the U.S. Mainland

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Testimonios: Migration Stories

Marlaine

For most of my early childhood, I lived in a small Puerto Rican *barrio* in the capital city of San Juan. Most of my days were spent with my tight-knight family, while my weekends were spent at the ocean. However, when I was just 7 years old, my mother, sister, and I left Puerto Rico to escape her abusive marriage. At that time, we moved to a small town in Connecticut, where I was exposed to a different language, climate, and, most salient, a completely different culture. Although difficult, being so young helped my older sister and I quickly learn English and adjust to the cultural differences. However, my mother had a drastically different experience. Despite her goal of achieving the "American dream," by arriving to the United States, she struggled living in a crowded relative's house and had difficulty finding steady employment. Nonetheless, she did not give up, and as a single mother, she successfully learned English while moving between Connecticut and Florida in search of different job opportunities. Throughout this time, we lived below the poverty line and struggled to meet our basic needs, often requiring government assistance.

At 12 years of age and after 5 years in the United States, my family became homeless and my mother decided to send my sister and I back to Puerto Rico to live with my grandmother. This time, returning to Puerto Rico was a bit more difficult given that my sister and I were older and had acculturated considerably to the mainland US culture. While I enjoyed the stability of living with my grandmother and the

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warmth of having a lot of family around, I grew frustrated with the unchallenging and disorganized public-school system on the island. Five years later at the age of 17, primarily for academic and financial motivations, I made the difficult decision to move back to the mainland on my own. Being the first person in my family who would go to college, I knew moving back would afford me the opportunities that I otherwise would not have had by remaining on the island. That move for me was a permanent one, and although I visit my family frequently and continue to help them financially, I had a way for the past 13 years, thereby transitioning my migrant pattern from circular to one-way.

Cristalís

I was born and raised in Ponce, Puerto Rico, on the south central coast of the island. My best childhood memories are those in which I am surrounded by cousins who were like siblings, and aunts and uncles who were like parents. Living close to each other helped build these strong bonds. By just walking up or down *la cuesta* [hill] I could be at my grandma's or my aunt's house. While weekdays were for school and church, Saturdays were for family meals at *casa de Mamá* [grandmother's house]. I also grew up surrounded by examples of hard work and sacrifice. Although none of my grandparents had more than a fourth-grade education, they worked hard to give their children the opportunities they did not have. Just as my grandparents had done, my parents did all they could to give my sister and me a better life, my mother as a middle school teacher, and my father as a security guard and plumber for a pharmaceutical factory.

Despite their efforts, a declining economy in the late 1990s, after the closure of many factories (including the pharmaceutical factory where my dad worked), prompted my parents to make the difficult decision to move our family to the US mainland, henceforth referred to as only mainland. Florida was our destination. The day we were scheduled to depart, a large part of my family came with us to the airport to say goodbye. We had to rent two 18-passenger vans. The trip to the airport was a combination of laughter as we recounted funny stories and tears every time we were reminded of the imminent separation, and that there would be no family waiting for us *al otro lado del charco* [on the other side of the puddle].

Upon arrival, we faced the difficult challenge of trying to function within a new culture. The inability to speak English fluently initially kept my mother from working as a teacher. Although my dad had been able to establish a small plumbing business on the island, he was never able to obtain his Florida license. The licensing tests were only offered in English, testing content knowledge, and not skills. Financial difficulties led my parents to experience feelings of shame and eventually symptoms of depression. As my parents struggled financially and psychologically due to their unmet expectations of what life in Florida would be like, my sister and I had to deal with a public-school system ill prepared to educate ESL students. According to my guidance counselor, I was not smart enough to attend a college or

university on the mainland. Fortunately, the extended Puerto Rican immigrant community helped my family and me transcend these challenges and thrive. With the love and support of new Puerto Rican friends who became our Florida family, as my grandparents had done before, my parents worked hard to push my sister and I forward towards educational success.

Marlaine and Cristalís' migration stories serve as examples of common experiences Puerto Rican families face when making the difficult decision to leave the island and the struggles and successes in their post-migration lives. They point to examples of racism, loss, *familismo*, and self-determination, all topics to be covered in this chapter. We begin with a brief historical and demographic review of this ethnically diverse Latinx group. Later in the chapter, we discuss pre-migration, migration-specific, and settlement patterns, examining common reasons for migration and the challenges faced on the island and the mainland. We end with a discussion of sociopsychological factors that affect the post-migration experiences of Puerto Ricans on the mainland and the strength of character and optimism that persists for the group as a whole. There are many Puerto Rican success stories, and these will be shared as exemplars for other Puerto Ricans, Latinx persons, and the mental health field at-large.

¿Qué es la que hay?[1]: A Profile of Puerto Rican People

On the mainland, Puerto Ricans are the second largest U.S. Latinx group (Krogstad, 2015). In terms of geographic location, approximately 51% of Puerto Ricans reside in the Northeast, 32% live in the South, 9% in the Midwest, and about 7% in the Western region of (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). As of 2010, more Puerto Ricans lived on the mainland than on the island (Krogstad, 2015). The mass migration of Puerto Ricans following the start of its latest financial crisis helps explain this phenomenon. For example, between 2005 and 2012, over 300,000 Puerto Ricans migrated from the island to the mainland, representing a 201% increase in migration compared to the decade before (see Fig. 1). Moreover, in 2015 alone, approximately 240 Puerto Ricans migrated to the mainland daily (Velázquez Estrada, 2017). The devastation caused by Hurricane María on September 20, 2017 has exacerbated Puerto Rican migration. According to reports, over 143,000 Puerto Ricans migrated from the island to Florida within the first 2 months after the storm (Florida Governor's Office, 2017). The island's struggle to recover has led demographers to estimate that the island will lose 14% of its population by 2019 (Meléndez & Hinojosa, 2017) reducing its overall population to a little less than three million. These statistics highlight the urgent need for professionals who work with this population to have a thorough understanding of the migration patterns, causes, consequences, and experiences of this unique Latinx community.

[1] ¿Qué es la que hay? [What's happening?].

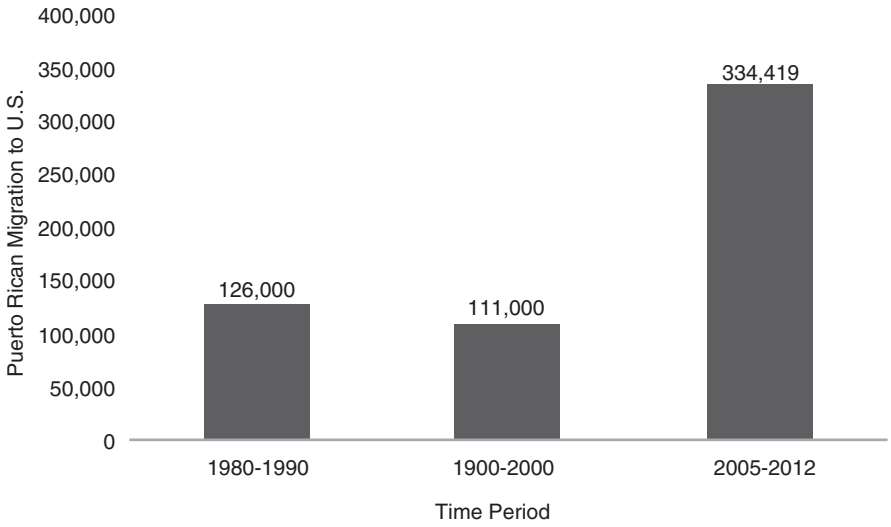

Fig. 1 Puerto Rican migration patterns to Mainland. Adapted from U.S. Census Bureau (2016)

The Oldest US Colony

Like many Latin American countries, Puerto Rico is also characterized by a history of White European colonization, decimation of indigenous people, exploitation of African slaves, a Spanish language dominant population, and Catholic roots (Delgado-Romero & Rojas-Vilches, 2004). Despite these significant similarities, Puerto Ricans are distinct from other Latinx groups due to their long-standing colonial relationship with the United States, which began following the Spanish-American War of 1898. This war resulted in the island of Puerto Rico becoming an unincorporated US territory. Nineteen years later, in 1917, Puerto Ricans were granted US citizenship after the enactment of the Jones-Shafroth Act (Sparrow & Lamm, 2017). However, this did not result in equal treatment or protections under the US constitution. To illustrate, Puerto Rican island residents are not allowed to vote in US presidential or congressional elections. Their sole representative in the US federal government, the Resident Commissioner, has no voting rights. Even when Puerto Ricans were finally allowed to vote for their own governor and establish a constitution under the Commonwealth status in 1952, the Puerto Rican constitution could not in any way contradict the US constitution (Torruella, 2017). Political subordination also prevents Puerto Ricans from having representation in the United Nations, the World Bank, or the International Monetary Fund; policies which have impeded the island's efforts to manage its financial crisis (Torruella, 2017). Instead, on June 9, 2016, the U.S. Congress passed the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability (PROMESA) Act (Nuño, 2016). PROMESA established an unelected seven-member board to oversee the island's finances and

debt (Nuño, 2016). These members were selected by President Obama out of a list generated by a Republican majority Congress (Nuño, 2016). Five members are Puerto Ricans (a judge and four economists) all whom lived on the mainland before their appointment. Two members are White American mainland residents (two economists; Sparks & Superville, 2017). PROMESA's proposed austerity measures have greatly affected island Puerto Ricans (e.g., reducing the federal minimum wage from $7.25 to $4.25 an hour for workers 25 years old and younger; Sparks & Superville, 2017). This decrease in wages creates greater inequity and social injustices.

Island Puerto Ricans unequal access to social services is another manifestation of its colonial status. Despite contributing to payroll and state taxes of $3.7 billion in 2009 (Torruella, 2017); island Puerto Ricans do not receive the same social welfare benefits made available to those on the mainland (Acosta-Belén & Santiago, 2006). While the federal match rate for Medicaid expenditures is 100% across all 50 states and D.C., Puerto Rico and other unincorporated territories have been relegated to receive only a 55% match rate since the 1965 Social Security Act (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2015). Additionally, Puerto Ricans on the island are not eligible to receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and island Puerto Ricans with disabilities only receive a $74 monthly stipend under the Aid to the Aged, Blind, or Disabled federal program, compared to the $750 month stipend individuals on the mainland receive through SSI (Torruella, 2017).

Puerto Rico's sociopolitical status has also had important cultural and institutional implications. For example, after the US arrival English was established as the island's language (Rivera Ramos, 2001). Although this practice ended in 1948 (Pousada, 1999), Puerto Rican public schools still have English as a mandatory subject. This may explain why one quarter of the island population identifies as bilingual (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Other early Americanization efforts in the island included compulsory and unnecessary medical interventions and centralization of medical care in an effort to regenerate the Puerto Rican blood as the dominant doctrine of the time was that Puerto Rican blood was degenerated due to Spanish colonization (Trujillo-Pagan, 2014). Physicians were also mandated to obtain a medical license and accreditation from the United States and prohibited from collaborating with *curanderos/as* [folk healers] or *parteras* [midwifes], also known as *comadronas* (Trujillo-Pagan, 2014). These interventions are often credited with the creation of an American-like medical system on the island (Trujillo-Pagan, 2014), not aligning with Puerto Rican values and practices. In terms of cultural values, while differences on adherence to individualism have been reported between Puerto Rican and US professionals, no differences were found around values of universality and utilitarianism (Fok, Payne, & Corey, 2016). This may be partly due to the US influence on Puerto Rican industry (Fok et al., 2016). Concerning ethno-racial identity, a majority of island Puerto Ricans identifies as Puerto Rican, American, and White (69%; U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Colorism resulting from colonization also influences Puerto Ricans' racial and ethnic identity self-identification. For example, island Puerto Rican women are more likely to use Puerto Rican as their ethnic label and White as their racial identity and mainland

Puerto Rican women are more likely to identify their ethnicity and race as Puerto Rican or Latina than black (Landale & Oropesa, 2001).

Over 100 years of differentiated political and financial policies have created an atmosphere of migration and cyclical poverty across island and mainland Puerto Ricans (Baker, 2002). Despite the island's geographical isolation, Puerto Ricans have been shaped by their contact with the United States. This has led researchers to suggest that island Puerto Ricans might be undergoing a process of acculturation to the United States without leaving the island (Cortés et al., 2003). For those who come to the mainland, prior contact with the United States while on the island may create the conditions for a unique acculturation and migration experience (Sánchez et al., 2014). For example, Duarte et al. (2008) found that Puerto Rican youth in San Juan experienced higher levels of acculturative stress than Puerto Rican youth living in New York. More recently, an examination of acculturation measurement models, Capielo, Lance, Delgado-Romero, and Domenech Rodríguez (in press) showed that acculturation among Central Florida Puerto Ricans and island Puerto Ricans (who had never lived in the United States) was best measured as a bidimensional construct of simultaneous adherence to Puerto Rican and White American cultural aspects across behavioral, values, and ethnic identity domains, which resulted in six acculturation factors (i.e., Puerto Rican behaviors, values, and ethnic identity and European American behaviors, values, and ethnic identity). Both samples had similar strength of relationships between the indicators and their respective factors and had similar range of scores across indicators. A mean comparison across groups showed that Central Florida and island Puerto Ricans only differed on their scores on Puerto Rican and European American values, with Central Florida Puerto Ricans having higher scores than island Puerto Ricans. Strong adherence to Puerto Rican values among Central Florida Puerto Ricans may reflect a commitment to their home cultures as they navigate being a minority on the mainland, something that island Puerto Ricans have not had to deal with. The strengthened attachment to Puerto Rican culture by those living on the mainland may also function as their assertion of moral and spiritual autonomy and resistance to persistent Americanization and assimilation efforts, "expressed in the protection of its [Puerto Rico's] historical patrimony" (Duany, 2003, p. 428).

Dr. Antonia Coello Novello

A current Central Florida resident, Dr. Antonia Coello Novello is a notable story of success. As the first woman and the first Latinx to become Surgeon General of the United States, she held the most prestigious position in public health. Born in the small town of Fajardo, Puerto Rico, Dr. Coello Novello was motivated to become a doctor after suffering from a medical condition and lacked resources to correct the condition as a child. Living most of her life in Puerto Rico, Dr. Coello Novello came from a humble but hardworking family. Her mother, a schoolteacher and later a junior high school and high school principal instilled in her the value of education.

Even with a medical condition that was not treated until the age of 20, Dr. Coello Novello graduated from high school at the age of 15 and went on to obtain her M.D. from the University of Puerto Rico. She moved to the mainland to continue her medical training in Michigan and then to Washington, DC. Early on in her career she blazed trails, becoming the first woman to be named intern of the year and then became deputy director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Dr. Coello Novello moved to the Central Florida area as vice president of Women and Children Health and Policy Affairs at Disney Children's Hospital at Florida Hospital in Orlando, Florida where she was in charge of advocating, translating, and implementing public health issues across the board and was actively involved with local organizations. She was passionate and made a huge impact on public health through her work. Like many Puerto Ricans on the mainland, Dr. Coello Novello sees in her accomplishments, the responsibility to forge paths for others, "*When you succeed, don't forget the responsibility of making somebody else succeed with you*" (Coello Novello, n.d.).

Current Demographics

According to the U.S. Census, the Puerto Rican population on the mainland now surpasses the island population, 5.1 million vs. 3.4 million (2016). Compared to other Latinx groups and the US population, Puerto Ricans are younger with a median age of 47 among island-born and 22 for those born on the mainland (Dockterman, 2011). Among Puerto Ricans 5 year and older and who currently in the United States, 42% are English-dominant, 16% are Spanish-dominant, 41% identify as bilingual, and 17% speak English "less than very well" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). However, a closer look at first-generation Puerto Ricans reveals important language expression differences. For instance, 36% of island-born Puerto Ricans are Spanish-dominant and 49% are bilingual (Dockterman, 2011). Regarding unemployment, most recent estimates indicate that the unemployment rate among Puerto Ricans is roughly 5% on the mainland, with the most common occupations for Puerto Ricans being in the fields of management, business, science, and arts (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Unfortunately, low unemployment has not translated to better income, as Puerto Rican yearly median household income is slight over $42,000, making them one of the lowest paid immigrant groups in the United States (Lopez & Velasco, 2011). Additionally, the share of Puerto Ricans who live in poverty, 27%, is higher than the rate for the general US population (16%) and for Latinx in general (25%; U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

Popular states for Puerto Ricans. While there are Puerto Ricans living in every state, there are ten states which lead the nation with the highest percentages of Puerto Ricans. These states, in order from most to least populous, are New York, Florida, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Connecticut, California, Illinois,

Texas, and Ohio. Based on the most recent report from the U.S. Census Bureau (2016), New York currently has the highest percentage of Puerto Ricans, with over a million residing in the state. However, the Puerto Rican population in New York and Florida only differ by less than 90,000 (Krogstad, 2015). Although New York City was the primary destination for Puerto Ricans for most of the 1900s (Gibson, 2016), a new pattern begun to emerge in the 1990s, as Florida became a popular destination for Puerto Ricans (Duanny, 2002), a pattern that continued during the 2000s. For instance, data from the 2014 American Community Survey (ACS) also showed that the Puerto Rican population in Florida increased by 110% since 2000 (2016). ACS data also revealed a preference for Florida over New York among recent migrants; between 2005 and 2013, while 43,363 island Puerto Ricans migrated to New York, 130,862 migrated to Florida (2016).

The sociodemographic profile of Puerto Ricans also appears to vary by mainland US region. A comparison between New York and Florida points to economic and educational advantages for Puerto Ricans in Florida (see Table 1). Additionally, the sociodemographic profile of migrants moving to Florida appears different from that of previous waves. For example, more Puerto Rican professionals, such as teachers and medical doctors, have been migrating to Florida (Duany & Silver, 2010). It is important to note that this information was gathered and evaluated prior to Hurricane María. Therefore, it is important to keep abreast of how Puerto Rican migration post-María will continue to change the US Puerto Rican and overall Latinx landscape. Regardless, the profile of Puerto Ricans in the United States needs to be understood in the context of the sociopolitical conditions and recent island devastation that continue to affect its people adversely.

Table 1 Socioeconomic profile of Puerto Ricans in New York, Florida, and Mainland

	Region		
Characteristic	New York	Florida	Mainland US
Income (past 12 months)			
Median household income	36,610	42,614	42,856
Poverty level (all families)			
Percent below poverty level	24	16.9	20.2
Employment status (16 years or older)			
Percent unemployed	5.5	4.7	5.5
Percent employed	49.5	56.9	56.0
Educational attainment (25 years or older)			
Percent high school graduate or higher	29.6	30.6	29.9
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	10.4	14.1	12.2
Ability to speak English (5 years or older)			
Percent speaks English less than "very well"	16.9	20.4	17.2

Note. 2016 American Community Survey

Health Profile

An examination of the leading causes of death among reveals a profile of health disparities among mainland Puerto Ricans. Compared to the general US population and other Latinx groups, cancer rates are highest among mainland Puerto Ricans (American Cancer Society, 2015). Puerto Ricans also report high rates of smoking, Hepatitis C, and obesity, all risk factors for cancer (American Cancer Society, 2015). Diabetes is another prevalent chronic disease among Puerto Ricans (Rodríguez-Vigil, Rodríguez-Chacón, & Valcarcel, 2016). Mortality associated with diabetes among Puerto Ricans is twice that of all other racial and ethnic groups in the United States (Colón-Ramos et al., 2016). According to the Hispanic Community Health Study/Study of Latinos, the overall prevalence of metabolic syndrome, a risk factor for diabetes, was highest among Puerto Ricans (Heiss et al., 2014).

A similar profile appears when examining the mental health of this community. For example, Puerto Ricans appear to be at a higher risk for mood and substance abuse disorders. For example, depression continues to disproportionately burden mainland Puerto Ricans (Liefland, Roberts, Ford, & Stevens, 2014). Puerto Ricans are more likely to reports higher depressive symptoms and major depression episodes than Mexican and Cubans in the United States, even after controlling for sociodemographic covariates (Alegría et al., 2008). Puerto Ricans also report higher rates of psychiatric disorders (Alegría et al., 2007) and mental health disabilities compared to Mexicans, Cubans, and other Latinxs (Rivera & Burgos, 2010).

Although there is a vast literature pointing to health and economic disparities among mainland Puerto Ricans, few studies have focused on explaining why this may be the case. One important sociopolitical aspect to consider among Puerto Ricans is colonization. In a recent study conducted by the first and second authors of this chapter, colonial mentality (i.e., internalized inferiority towards the colonized group and preference for the colonizer; David, Okazaki, & Giroux, 2014) was associated with higher acculturative stress, which in turn predicted more depression symptomatology among mainland Puerto Ricans (Capielo, Schaefer, Ballesteros, Renteria, & David, 2018). Circular migration and frequent travel between the island and the mainland can also help explain health disparities (Alegría et al., 2008). For example, Aranda (2006) found that participants associated circular migration with their feelings of disconnection, loneliness, and estrangement. Post-migration, experiences of discrimination, and housing segregation have also been linked to lower socioeconomic status and higher mental and physical disability among mainland Puerto Ricans (Baker, 2002).

Another area that deserves further examination is the *immigrant health paradox*. Scholarship from a wide range of disciplines indicates that Latinx immigrants have similar or better psychological and physical health outcomes than the US-born Latinx study participants (Sánchez et al., 2014). While research points to a possible advantage first-generation Latinxs may have over older generations, these findings have not been consistently replicated among first-generation Puerto Ricans (Sánchez et al., 2014). These discrepancies highlight potential implications of the unique

Puerto Rican migration reality. For example, important differences between mainland and island Puerto Ricans may have been blurred by decades of unrestricted and circular migration between the territory and the mainland. In the next sections, we explore how the island's status influences the pre- and post-migration experiences of Puerto Ricans.

La guagua aérea[2]: Migration and Settlement Patterns in the United States

Puerto Rican migration is an integral part of Puerto Rican life. Unlike other Latinx groups, Puerto Rican migration is officially classified as internal migration (Alcántara, Chen, & Alegría, 2014). However, the cultural, linguistic, racial, and socioeconomic crossing that Puerto Ricans experience when they migrate to the mainland is more comparable to that of immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean than to US internal migrants (Landale & Oropesa, 2001). Therefore, the migration experience of Puerto Ricans can be best understood when analyzed from a transnational perspective (Duany, 2003). The magnitude of living on the mainland while maintaining a strong connection with the island (about 87% of Puerto Ricans visit the island more than once a year; Duany, 2010) demonstrates the need for a better understanding of migratory processes and the psychological consequences of migration for Puerto Ricans.

Puerto Rican migration takes three forms: the "one-way migrants," who move permanently to the mainland; the "return migrants" who after many years return to the island from the mainland to re-establish residence; and the "circular migrants" who migrate back and forth between the island and the mainland spending extensive periods of residence in both places (Acevedo, 2004). The following subsections will provide more specific information on the three subcategories of Puerto Rican migration patterns.

One-Way Migrants

One-way migration of Puerto Ricans refers to individuals and families who migrate from the island to the mainland and who do not return to the island for residency (Acevedo, 2004). These individuals are distinct from those who return to the island or who engage in circular migration patterns in that they maintain residency on the mainland throughout the remainder of their lives. Despite being US citizens by birth, these individuals demonstrate similar migration challenges faced by other Latinx immigrant communities such as acculturative stress, intergenerational

[2] The 1993 film *La Guagua Aérea* [The Airbus] was written by Luis Rafael Sánchez about the immigration of Puerto Ricans to the mainland during the decades of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.

conflict, and increased risk of living in impoverished conditions (Landale & Oropesa, 2001). A qualitative study sample of 20 middle-class Puerto Rican one-way migrants reported experiencing separation from family and kinship networks, racism, discrimination, and exclusion from the mainstream culture (Aranda, 2007). Perhaps because study participants were of middle- to upper-class social status, they did not report concerns commonly associated with financial hardship. It is important to note that this study, while rich in data on the middle-class experience of one-way Puerto Rican migrants, is unable to describe the experience of working-class and poor Puerto Rican migrants living on the mainland, more representative of the majority of Puerto Rican migrants. However, Aranda (2007) pointed out that the experience of transnationalism is more common among those with higher education, and therefore with more access to resources to be able to migrate to the mainland. As such, this study describes an important profile of the social and discriminatory experiences that one-way migrants can encounter.

Several other studies have examined the impact of one-way Puerto Rican migration among lower- and working-class individuals. For example, Aguilera (2005) pointed out that Puerto Rican migrants are among the lowest wage earners of any ethnic or racial group in the United States, despite their privileged status of being able to automatically and legally work in the United States. Although Aguilera (2005) did not measure the psychological impact of low wages on mainland Puerto Ricans, low wages have been associated with a perceived loss of social status, which was in turn is or was associated with an increased risk for mental and physical health complications (Alegría, Canino, Stinson, & Grant, 2006).

As noted in Cristalís' testimonio, her parents' inability to initially obtain employment and salary commensurate to their education and experience in Puerto Rico not only resulted in financial struggles for her family but also in psychological distress. As such, professionals working with this community need to pay attention to the role of unmet financial expectations may have on Puerto Ricans migrants.

Return Migrants

Return migrants are those who previously migrated to the mainland from the island and returned to live on a permanent basis (Acevedo, 2004). These immigrants may have settled in the United States for a period, but eventually made the decision to resettle back on the island. Between 2000 and 2010 it is estimated that 11,000–13,780 Puerto Ricans below the age of 65 migrated from the mainland to the island (U.S. Census, 2010). A qualitative study which examined the lived experiences of 20 return Puerto Rican migrants showed that while they did not have the intention to resettle back in Puerto Rico, the challenges they faced in the United States (e.g., perceived downward social mobility, loss of kinship) contributed to increased psychological distress and ultimately their decision to return to the island (Aranda, 2007). Moreover, Aranda (2007) also points out how structural inequalities (e.g., work discrimination) contributed to the decision to leave the mainland and return to Puerto Rico.

As would be expected, return migrants experience many of the same social and economic disadvantages as other Puerto Ricans living on the island who never left (Aranda, 2007). Examples include decreased accessibility and coverage of social welfare programs (i.e., Medicare/Medicaid), lack of representation in the U.S. Congress, and decreased federal funding for relief aid in natural disasters (e.g., US government's response to the crisis in Puerto Rico after Hurricane María compared to Texas after Hurricane Harvey). Furthermore, return migrants can also experience a shift in their social relationships upon their return, as the extended distance from the island may result in a loss of the social relationship that once existed. As illustrated in Marlaine's testimony, some return migrants may also experience the challenges associated with the re-acclimation process to their native country.

Circular Migrants

Perhaps the most unique group of migrants are those who engage in a circulatory migration pattern. Circular migrants are those who continually reside on both the mainland and the island of Puerto Rico (Acevedo, 2004). Circular migration for Puerto Ricans can be traced back to the recruitment of Puerto Rican men by mainland factories and farms in the early and mid-twentieth century (Duany, 2003). Historically, initial waves of migration to the United States by Puerto Ricans peaked immediately after World War II when multiple government contracts were established between the mainland and the island. Circular migration of Puerto Ricans was exacerbated during the 1960s when high unemployment rates in Puerto Rico forced many individuals to seek seasonal or temporary work on the mainland to provide for their families (Duany, 2003). This resulted in the circular migration patterns that we know today, as economic changes influence when certain circulatory Puerto Rican migrants enter and leave the mainland. To illustrate, between 1980 and 2000, circular migration accounted for 10–20% of total migration between the mainland and the island (Duany, 2002). Although no data is available, circular migration is expected to be significantly less from 2005 to 2010, a period that saw a persistent negative net migration for the island, associated with the island's financial crisis (Otterstrom & Tillman, 2013).

As was noted in Marlaine's testimony, circular migration patterns are not always a result of economic conditions. In her case, the circular migration was, in part, due to leaving a negative situation, as well as the need to return when stable and consistent work was not obtainable on the mainland. The same is also true of other types of migration patterns. Simply because individuals meet the definition for one migration pattern, does not mean that they remain in said category for the remainder of their lives. As such, professionals working with Puerto Rican migrants should avoid categorizing an individual into one of these categories. Puerto Rican migrants are fluid and capable of shifting between categories depending on their circumstances and responses.

Ibrahim Ramos Pomales

Mr. Ramos, as he is known in the middle school, teaches at in Osceola County, Florida, migrated from the island with his family in 2011. A clinical researcher and lecturer in the island, Mr. Ramos left after his contract lapsed and was not renewed due to the financial crisis. Similar to other first-generation Puerto Ricans who migrate to the mainland, language barriers initially kept him from obtaining a job commensurate with his education and experience. Despite his disappointments, Mr. Ramos recounts with pride his journey towards eventually becoming a teacher in Florida.

> "It doesn't matter if you have to start from zero, if you have to clean toilets or work at Burger King…all work is honorable, and all works serves you as experience. I arrived without knowing much English, I could write it but being able to have a conversation was my biggest obstacle but today I teach at a middle school. I still have other goals to achieve, I am not done yet but having an accent won't get on my way. You have to do it for yourself and for your family. Each day you have to try, try, try" (I. Ramos Pomales, personal communication, March 12, 2015).

Se pusieron los huevos a peseta[3]: The Migration Journey

Mr. Ramos' migration story is also supported by the data on Puerto Rican migrants. According to the Current Population Survey, employment and a desire to give their families better opportunities were the most commonly identified reasons by Puerto Ricans when asked to explain their migration to the mainland (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). However, this is not a new trend. Soon after the US invasion of Puerto Rico, a diversified agricultural economy was turned into a predominantly sugar producing economy (Baker, 2002). The devastation caused by Hurricane San Ciriaco in 1899 further devastated the coffee industry of the island. Recovery efforts after the storm were stultified by the US government's denial of funds to help coffee producers (Trujillo-Pagan, 2014). As impoverished conditions took hold of the island, many Puerto Ricans had no other remedy but to migrate to the mainland in search of employment (Baker, 2002). Puerto Rican contract labor to Hawaii, New York, and other US locations between the 1900s and 1950s, became a colonial government strategy (Acevedo, 2004). Migration became a method to deal with Puerto Rico's vast poverty and unemployment and to fill the low-wage labor needs of the mainland US, including the distant islands of Hawaii (Acosta-Belén & Santiago, 2006).

The search for better economic opportunities continued to be the central reason for Puerto Rican migration through the 1940s and 1950s. Failed US economic policies on the island such as operation Bootstrap (this policy eliminated corporate tax

[3] Se pusieron los huevos a peseta [An egg is now worth a quarter]. Common Puerto Rican saying to describe a worsening situation.

for American companies that relocated to the island; Ruiz Toro, n.d.). The situation further exacerbated Puerto Rican migration during this period, often described as the Great Migration of the 1950s (Duany, 2002). Most Puerto Ricans settled in the northeast US (Baker, 2002), primarily New York, Connecticut, and New Jersey. Upon their arrival, however, many faced racial, housing, and employment discrimination (Baker, 2002). This dynamic is thought to be one of the main factors to explain the overrepresentation of northeast Puerto Ricans in low-wage and light manufacturing jobs (Baker, 2002) and circular Puerto Rican migration (Acosta-Belén & Santiago, 2006).

As Puerto Ricans on the mainland continued to struggle, the island's economic conditions were improving. In 1976, the U.S. Congress approved Section 936 of the Internal Revenue System, which provided tax incentives to US companies that relocated to the island (Corrales, 2001). Section 936 led to an increase in the Puerto Rican banking, construction, and pharmaceutical sectors and indirectly led to the creation of managerial, exporting, and clerical jobs needed to sustain this new economy (Corrales, 2001). These factors had important consequences for Puerto Rican migration to the United States and by the mid-1970s, migration to the mainland declined (Baker, 2002; Otterstrom & Tillman, 2013).

By the early 1980s, Section 936 began to receive much opposition from the U.S. Congress (Collins & Bosworth, 2006). Job creation decelerated and migration to the United States once again intensified (Collins & Bosworth, 2006). All efforts to renew Section 936 failed and by 2005, most tax incentives to American companies ended (Collins & Bosworth, 2006). The end of this tax incentive program sent the Puerto Rican economy once again into recession and Puerto Ricans continued their migration to the mainland (Duany & Silver, 2010). However, Puerto Ricans began to see in Florida a more suitable destination. Because they found in Florida better housing and employment opportunities, and a lower cost of living (Duany & Silver, 2010).

This latest wave of Puerto Rican migration from 2010 to 2017 has been described as unprecedented and more significant than the Great Migration of the 1950s (Meléndez & Hinojosa, 2017). Most continue to choose Florida, particularly the Central Florida region. Among the reasons for electing to move to Central Florida are access to a growing job market, a lower cost of living, and a climate and culture similar to what they left behind (Barreneche, Lombardi, & Ramos-Flores, 2012). The rapidly growing Florida Puerto Rican population offers new challenges and opportunities to examine the impact of colonization, migration, and other sociocultural factors. The emergent literature on this population paints a mixed profile of struggles and successes. For instance, while the Florida Puerto Rican population report higher education attainment, income, and business ownership than Puerto Ricans in the Northeast, compared to other Latinx groups in Florida, Puerto Ricans have a higher rate of mental health and physical health disabilities (Duany & Silver, 2010). In terms of sociocultural correlates of mental health, in a recent study conducted by the first author of this chapter, it was found that as levels of acculturative stress increased among Puerto Ricans in Central Florida, so did their likelihood of experiencing moderate or severe levels of depression symptomatology (Capielo,

Delgado-Romero, & Stewart, 2015). On the other hand, those who practice adaptive forms of coping (e.g., talking to a friend or family member) were less likely to experience moderate or severe levels of depression symptoms (Capielo et al., 2015).

Sonia Sotomayor

Poverty and the need to find and secure a better life for themselves and the family they hoped to have, Juan and Celina Sotomayor left their homeland of Puerto Rico to settle in the United States. One-way migrants, they permanently settled in the Bronx, had two children and created a community with relatives and other Puerto Rican neighbors. A single mother after the passing of her husband at 42, Celina insisted on the importance of education, being the only one in the neighborhood to purchase encyclopedias and send both children to Catholic schools. Both children eventually graduated from college with high honors and her son went on to become a physician and her daughter a lawyer. She credits her parent's strength and migration story with her success and for her strong Latina identity. A self-described "Nuyorican" she describes her identity nurtured through shared experiences and traditions with a closely knit family. At 8 years old she learned that she had diabetes, lost her father when she was 9, and lived most of her childhood in poverty. Yet, Sonia Sotomayor, a true American dream success story, persevered, eventually attending Princeton, then Yale for her law degree, and making history as only the third woman and the first Latinx to sit on the highest court in the land (Felix, 2011).

Additional Devastation

On September 20, 2017, Hurricane María, a Category 4 hurricane when it arrived at the Yabucoa Harbor just after 6 am local time, brought unprecedented devastation to the island. The results of the storm were insurmountable and catastrophic, leaving thousands without access to running water, shelter, food, healthcare, and other basic life necessities. Although major news outlets reported just under 500 known deaths, the final death toll due to the indirect causes of Hurricane María such as deaths due to unsanitary living conditions and a lack of access to life-sustaining resources remains unknown (Hernández & McGinley, 2018). One measurable consequence of Hurricane María is the influx of island Puerto Ricans on the mainland US. To illustrate, Florida, a state that was already home to a high number of Puerto Ricans, has received an influx of over 143,000 Puerto Ricans since the natural disaster (Florida Governor's Office, 2017), and it is expected that the state will receive between 40,000 and 82,000 Puerto Ricans annually between 2017 and 2019 (Meléndez & Hinojosa, 2017).

It remains to be seen what will become of the island of Puerto Rico and its residents in the wake of Hurricane María. While it is known that many island Puerto

Ricans remain without electricity, running water, stable shelter, and safe roads, it is what remains unknown about the future that brings about a chilling uncertainty for the island, its inhabitants, and those directly and indirectly impacted by this disaster. Streets remain filled with lines of individuals hoping to obtain employment, with the demand for employment greatly outweighing the need for hire. The US government's insufficient response to this natural disaster compared to its response to Texas in the wake of Hurricane Harvey demonstrates the lack of responsibility the administration feels to Puerto Ricans. In fact, President Donald Trump expressed his opinion on the U.S. Federal Government providing relief services to the Puerto Rico after Hurricane María, further demonstrating the disparaging gap that exists between Puerto Ricans and their non-Puerto Rican US counterparts.

> *"[Puerto Ricans] want everything to be done for them"* (Trump, D. J. [realDonaldTrump], September 26, 2017).

> *"…We cannot keep FEMA, the Military & the First Responders, who have been amazing (under the most difficult of circumstances) in P.R. forever!"* (Trump, D. J. [realDonaldTrump], October 12, 2017).

These racist and blaming statements while shocking to most, were for many Puerto Ricans, an unnerving echo of earlier colonization ideas, which blamed supposed Puerto Rican degeneration and laziness as the reasons why the island could not prosper after the devastation caused by Hurricane San Ciriaco in 1899 (Trujillo-Pagan, 2014). The statements also reflect the unwillingness of the US government to take any responsibility for being largely responsible for the disastrous economic situation that was already besieging the island much earlier than the arrival of Hurricane María.

Resilience in the face of adversity is not new to Puerto Ricans. While Hurricane María brought devastation to Puerto Rico, there are continued displays of Puerto Rican resilience and solidarity with each passing day. According to a New York Times report by James Wagner (April 2018), Puerto Ricans continue to demonstrate hope and resilience in various ways, even through sports. According to the report, despite not being able to play in their home field as it had been damaged during the storm, a Puerto Rican baseball team known as *Los Toritos de Cayey*, a team comprised of community members, came together to play in an effort to provide much needed distraction and a sense of normalcy to its community. While these individuals demonstrated resilience on the island in the face of continued devastation, this also serves as an example of how Puerto Ricans, be they on the island or the mainland, collectively harbor resilience within themselves.

Another example of solidarity and resilience can be found through the Puerto Rican Facebook group #PuertoRicoMariaUpdates, created by Arizona State University communications professor, Dr. Manuel Aviles Santiago, wherein Puerto Ricans are able to feed information from the island to friends and family on the mainland about their safety and well-being. Specifically, this public forum permitted individuals to contact relatives and loved ones who were unable to be reached due to the destruction of power lines, cell phone towers, and bridges and roads in

many towns for months after the storm. This service also united Puerto Ricans on the island and mainland, serving as a platform for communication regarding resources and safe ways to purify water. Furthermore, for Puerto Ricans who migrated to the mainland in the aftermath of the storm, opportunities for learning English and finding employment, and other resources were advertised to assist individuals in their migration to the mainland. This group further demonstrates the solidarity that mainland Puerto Ricans have for their island dwelling counterparts. Especially with the lack of resources, and ostensibly being ignored by the Trump Administration, the group continues to serve as a way to organize the transport of supplies to the island for those who are most in need.

Wilfredo Colón

In January of 2018, Wilfredo Colón and his family made the difficult decision to leave the island and settle in Texas. Although Wilfredo and his family tried to maintain their tattoo business open in a post-María Puerto Rico, 3 months without electricity and potable water made this an unsurmountable task. With nothing more than their suitcases, Wilfredo and his family started from zero but with dedication and effort, in March of 2018, Wilfredo met his goal of opening a new tattoo business in Texas. When asked about what he enjoys most of his new business, Wilfredo describes the joy and satisfaction he feels when meeting other Latinxs and how through his art he can help them connect to their homeland. *"Everyone misses their land and every time they ask me for a cultural symbol, I get creative and make it happen. There is nothing more gratifying than that"* ("Wilfredo Colón Latinos Tatto," 2018).

Al otro lado del charco[4]: The Post-migration Era

Puerto Rican migration, whether it be one-way, return, or circular, can pose several challenges for Puerto Ricans. Examples of these challenges are perceived downward social mobility, acculturative stress, and racial and ethnic discrimination. These challenges in turn have been associated with the use of maladaptive coping skills, such as alcohol use and denial that there is a problem (Capielo et al., 2015) and experiences with mental illness (Alcántara et al., 2014). On the other hand, adaptive coping (e.g., seeking emotional and instrumental support), retention of Puerto Rican cultural practices, and strong ethnic identity have been associated with better health outcomes among Puerto Ricans on the mainland.

[4] Al otro lado del charco [At the other side of the puddle]. In Puerto Rico, this expression is often used to describe individuals or families who have crossed an ocean and now live on the mainland. It is also used to describe the situations Puerto Ricans may experience on the mainland.

Social Mobility

Social mobility is the movement individuals or groups experience through a system of social hierarchy (Müller, 2001). When individuals experience a loss in social class, this is known as downward social mobility; when social class gains are made, upward social mobility takes place (Müller, 2001). Upon migration to the mainland, Puerto Ricans may find themselves unable to meet their pre-migration expectations. For example, difficulty to find a job commensurate to their preparation and experience, inability to fluently communicate in English, and obtain a well-paying job are among some of the experiences new Puerto Rican migrants identify as stressful post-migration experiences (Aranda & Riviera, 2016). Cross-sectional and longitudinal research findings also support the connection between downward social mobility and psychological distress among Puerto Rican migrants. For instance, an examination by Alcántara et al. (2014) found that perceived downward social mobility and loss of social status among Puerto Rican migrants predicted past-year major depressive episodes (MDE). In other words, Puerto Ricans who perceived they held a lower social status in the United States relative to their perceived social status on the island, had higher tendencies of having an MDE relative to those who did not perceive any differences in social status following migration.

Acculturative Stress

Although acculturation[5] is an important correlate of Latinx well-being (David et al., 2014), acculturation is not a consistent predictor of Puerto Rican psychological (Capielo et al., 2015; Cintrón, Carter, & Sbrocco, 2005) or physical health (see Lara, Gamboa, Kahramanian, Morales, & Hayes Bautista, 2005). On the other hand, acculturative stress may be a more significant than acculturation in explaining post-immigration psychological distress among Puerto Ricans.

When individual finds themselves unable to cope with new cultural demands such as having to learn a new language, acculturative stress emerges (Castillo et al., 2015). Among Latinxs, acculturative stress has been associated with psychological maladjustment (Torres, 2010). Various studies examining the relationship between acculturative stress among Puerto Ricans living in the northeast US have demonstrated the negative effect of acculturative stress on Puerto Rican psychological well-being. There is a historic pattern of the effects of acculturative stress for Puerto Ricans reported in numerous studies. For instance, Dressler and Bernal (1982) found that acculturative stress among Puerto Ricans living in northeast urban areas predicted higher levels of poorer health and behavioral problems. Similarly, Conway, Swendsen, Dierker, Canino, and Merikangas (2007) showed that acculturative stress was associated with co-occurring substance and psychiatric disorders

[5] Acculturation is bidimensional process of change across cultural domains (e.g., behaviors, values) that individuals may experience as they come in contact with a new dominant culture (Gibson, 2016).

among Puerto Ricans. While less is known about the effects of acculturative stress among Puerto Ricans in other areas of the United States, as previously mentioned, Capielo et al. (2015) found that individuals with moderate and severe depression symptoms were more likely to report increased acculturative stress than those with mild depression symptoms. Among important predictors of acculturative stress include loss of social networks and economic difficulties (Aranda & Riviera, 2016).

Racial and Ethnic Discrimination

Rejection from the dominant culture and perceived discrimination are other important correlates of post-migration stress experienced by mainland Puerto Ricans. Perceived discrimination is also associated with lower self-esteem and more depression symptomatology among Puerto Rican youth (Szalacha et al., 2003). Racism and discrimination also influence Puerto Rican circular migration (Aranda, 2009). The systematic discrimination Puerto Ricans experience in housing, employment, and contact with law enforcement have been associated with reasons to return to the island (Aranda, 2009).

Perceived ethnic and racial discrimination also appears to affect how Puerto Ricans navigate the acculturation process. For instance, in a recent study led by the first author of this chapter, results showed that Spanish-speaking Puerto Ricans in Central Florida with darker skin color were less likely to engage in White American behaviors such as socializing with White Americans or speaking English. They were also less likely to endorse White American values such as individualism. The same study found that the more Spanish-speaking Puerto Ricans experienced racial and ethnic discrimination the less likely they were to practice Latinx behaviors or values such as *familismo*. A majority of Puerto Ricans in Central Florida have settled in what were predominantly White neighborhoods, thus distancing from Latinx behaviors and values may be a mechanism Puerto Ricans in Central Florida utilize in order to avoid experiencing ethnic discrimination. On the other hand, among English-speaking Central Florida Puerto Ricans, more experiences of racial and ethnic discrimination predicted endorsing a stronger Puerto Rican identity (Capielo, Adames, Chavez-Dueñas, & Rentería, 2017). This study highlights the need to contextualize the migration and acculturation experience of Puerto Ricans on the mainland. Further investigations are needed to understand how the context of reception affects the acculturative experiences of mainland Puerto Ricans.

Cultural Values, **Patria***, and Identity*

Puerto Ricans demonstrate persistent resiliency, grit, and creativity despite the challenges associated with migration, the island's colonial status, and the recent natural disaster. Therefore, it is just as important to recognize what constitutes these challenges and their subsequent consequences. Moreover, it is imperative to examine

the strengths of the Puerto Rican community, including what helps individuals thrive in the face of colonialism, loss and change, and adversity.

Specifically, to be noted are cultural values which have been demonstrated to serve as positive coping strategies. Some examples include cultural values such as *familismo* (high value Latinx families place on their family; Marín & Gamba, 2003) and *personalismo* (describes the importance given to forming and maintaining personal connections; Delgado-Romero, Nevels, Capielo, Galván, & Torres, 2013), both of which have been associated with well-being (Gallo, Penedo, Espinosa de los Monteros, & Arguelles, 2009). In their examination of newly arrived Puerto Ricans in Florida, Aranda and Riviera (2016) also found that *personalismo* and social capital were the primary cultural assets Puerto Ricans in Florida used to help in their post-migration transition, for instance, in finding housing and employment. Talking to family and friends and seeking support are also associated with less acculturative stress among Puerto Ricans (Capielo et al., 2015).

Puerto Ricans healing practices like *espiritísmo* (reflects the belief in a spiritual and invisible world that influences human behavior and communication with deceased family members to ameliorate distress; Comas-Díaz, 1981) and *curanderismo* also manifest Puerto Rican resistance against perpetual colonization. During the period of forced medical interventions, these healing practices were a way for *jíbaros* (individuals who live in the mountains and rural areas of Puerto Rico) to preserve their way of living in the presence of the new colonizers. Today, *espiritísmo* is widely practiced and accepted in the island (Torres Rivera, 2005) and is associated with positive psychological outcomes (Torres Rivera, 2005).

Puerto Ricans are also characterized for the efforts to *hacer patria* (refers to actions that contribute to help maintain a connection to the heritage culture) while on the mainland. Puerto Ricans *hacen patria* on the mainland every time a student earns good grades or when a family attends *Las Fiestas de la Calle* in Orlando every January. Having a strong Puerto Rican ethnic identity can also be seen as one of these efforts. Among mainland Puerto Ricans, a strong ethnic identity is associated with having positive self-esteem (López, 2008) and is a protective factor against substance use (Brook, Whiteman, Balka, Win, & Gursen, 1998). As a result of Hurricane María, Puerto Ricans on the island and the mainland are also finding in their heritage culture a source of strength. As stated by University of Puerto Rico Caribbean history professor, Juan Guisti-Cordero in his recantation of post-Maria life in the island, "In Puerto Rico, we invented resilience" (Guisti-Cordero, 2012).

'Tato' habla'o?![6]: Conclusion

The unique migration experience of Puerto Ricans between the mainland and the island is best understood from an historical and transnational perspective. Given the relationship that Puerto Rico has with the United States, the acculturative

[6] Tato' habla'o [All is said]. Usually said at the end of a conversation right before each person goes their separate way.

experience of Puerto Ricans on the mainland differs from that of other Latinx communities. There are different migration reasons and patterns, but these are often a reflection of the island's colonial status. However, as illustrated by the migration testimonies and data on Puerto Rican post-migration experiences, Puerto Ricans are a resilient and hardworking community, and like many other migrant communities in the United States, they sacrifice in search of a better life. As the Puerto Rican mainland community continues to shift and grow, it is imperative for mental health professionals to explore and understand the complex experiences of Puerto Ricans and how their unique sociopolitical status may influence how they navigate living between two cultures and their well-being.

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