

BUREAU OF APPLIED SOCIAL RESEARCH

Columbia University

15 Amsterdam Avenue

New York 23, New York

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Hon. Jesus T. Piñero
Governor of Puerto Rico
La Fortaleza
San Juan, Puerto Rico

My dear Governor Piñero:

The Bureau of Applied Social Research has completed the survey authorized by you last October. Interviews were conducted with one person in each of 1,113 households in Harlem and the Lower East Bronx, the two major areas of Puerto Rican residence in New York City. We also obtained data on the other members in each of these households, making a total of 5,000 individuals on whom we have information. These households were selected by a careful sampling technique, and it is our opinion that this group is representative of the Puerto Ricans residing in these areas, which contain over half the Puerto Ricans in New York City.

We shall not attempt to summarize for you the detailed findings of our study in this letter, for it is of the essence of such work that the full details are of interest in and of themselves. We shall, however, extract a few of the highlights of our findings, and indicate their possible uses.

From an administrative point of view it seems to us that there are three well defined, but of course overlapping, areas which our study can serve.

I. There are data which can be used to inform the New York public about the Puerto Rican colony in New York City.

II. There are facts which can be used in defining future policy for your government departments.

III. There is information of value to the welfare agencies in New York City, particularly the data on relief.

We do not here attempt to write a formal set of recommendations, for it has been the experience of our Bureau that such recommendations are of considerably more value when they are worked out jointly by researcher and policy-maker. We have therefore set up the machinery for providing to you the services of the associate director of our study, who will be available during the next several months to consult with whomever you may designate as a liaison person between your office and the Bureau of Applied Social Research. This arrangement will make it possible for your office to refer to us further queries which can be answered from our files of material on the Puerto Rican migrant.

I

STATISTICAL DESCRIPTION

1. Estimates of Population Size - In the absence of a complete census enumeration or its equivalent, an accurate count of the number of Puerto Ricans in New York is, of course, impossible. But

there are certain sources of information available which indicate the extent of Puerto Rican settlement in New York City, namely,

(a) a census of the enrollment of Puerto Rican children in the city's public schools, combined with (b) an estimate of parochial school enrollment; (c) estimates made by two government agencies; (d) the official records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service; (e) our own sample enumeration, and other sources. Collating these records enabled us to estimate that the number of Puerto Ricans in New York ranges between 160,000 and 200,000, with the weight of evidence favoring 160,000.

Sources
on
population

2. Flow of Migration - It is well known that migration to New York City from the island has been going on for many years. Of the 5,000 people in the households we studied, 25 per cent had been born on the mainland. Of those who had migrated, (3,569) almost half (43 per cent) had come before the war; 22 per cent had come during the war; and 35 per cent since the war.

35%
after war

3. Age - The median age of the New York Puerto Ricans is 24.2. This is nearly five years above the median age on the island in the last census year, but approximately the same as that of San Juan at that time.

The New York Puerto Ricans are considerably younger than the total population of New York City in 1940. Of the 5,000 persons who lived in the households we investigated

- 52 per cent were under 25 years of age compared with 34 per cent of the New York population
- 33 per cent of the Puerto Ricans were between 25 and 44 years of age compared with 37 per cent in New York.
- 15 per cent of the Puerto Ricans were 45 years or older, in New York, 29 per cent.

4. Sex - There are slightly more Puerto Rican women than men in the two core areas in New York City. Among the 5,000 persons in the households we investigated, 54 per cent were females, 46 per cent were males. This differs from the distribution in Puerto Rico, where the sex ratio is 50-50. But since the New York migrants are predominantly of urban origin, their sex ratio is more comparable with the urban sex ratio on the island, which was, in 1940, 53-47.

5. Color - Sixty-three (63) per cent of the 1,113 respondents are white; 5 per cent are Negro; 15 per cent, mulatto. The remaining 17 per cent are classified in the mixed group known in Puerto Rico as "grifo" and "indio." Here, as in other respects, migrants living in the Bronx and Harlem differ. Seventy-seven (77) per cent of all respondents in the Bronx are white, in Harlem, 57 per cent.

6. Household Size - In the average Puerto Rican household in each borough there are 4.4 persons. In Harlem the typical apartment has 2.7 rooms. The average Bronx apartment is about half a room larger, with 3.1 rooms. There are 1.3 persons per room in Manhattan, and 1.1 in the Bronx. For these boroughs on the whole, including the

*more
women
than men*

*63%
white*

*4.4 persons
per household
in P.R.*

note
high as well as the low income groups, the average in 1940 was a little under one person per room. The Puerto Ricans are more crowded together than the average resident of New York, but not to the extent of five or six in a room, which is sometimes considered typical.

II

MIGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT

search for economic betterment (better jobs)
7. Reasons for Migration - The main reason the migrants give for coming to New York is their search for economic betterment. Almost half the reasons they give for having made the change involve this factor.

Other reasons for migrating refer to the migrant's desire to join his family, to attend schools, utilize hospitals, and other facilities which the city offers.

8. Pre-Emigration Employment - When only those migrants are considered who were in the labor force (working or seeking work) in Puerto Rico -- that is, excluding school children, housewives, those who were too old to work, or who had already retired -- we found that 85 per cent of the migrants in the labor force had quit jobs to make the trip; 15 per cent had been unemployed at the time they left Puerto Rico. The majority (71 per cent) had worked the entire twenty-four months of the two years just before they left for New York. In other words, they were not in search of jobs as such, but of better jobs.

71% had worked in island

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9. Finding a Job - Ninety-one (91) per cent of those in the labor force arrived in New York City without prior arrangements for a job. There has been some speculation lately that many Puerto Rican migrants have been brought to New York by labor contractors. We found, however, that only 3 per cent of those now in the New York labor force had come on contract; another 6 per cent had assured themselves of jobs before they left, mostly through friends and relatives.

*Increase
in earning
power*

10. Income - The Puerto Rican migrant in the labor force who comes to New York increases his earning power immediately. The average weekly cash income of those migrants who came during the post-war period from the island's labor force and who got jobs in New York was:

note †

- last job in Puerto Rico, \$14.60
- first job in New York, \$28.05

Average earnings for those who came during the war years were:

- last job in Puerto Rico, \$14.00
- first job in New York, \$31.43

Earnings of those who came during the 1930's, the depression years, averaged:

- last job in Puerto Rico, \$12.00
- first job in New York, \$22.62

Corresponding earnings for those who came in the prosperity years prior to 1929 were:

- last job in Puerto Rico, \$13.00
- first job in New York, \$19.04

Regardless of the period in which they came to New York, the migrants consistently earn more money on their first job in New York than they had earned in Puerto Rico. Those who came prior to 1929 got jobs which paid them about 50 per cent more than the jobs they had left in Puerto Rico. Those who came during the depression years increased their income 89 per cent. Those who came during the war years more than doubled their Puerto Rican earnings as soon as they got a job in New York. Those who came in the post-war years did not quite double the wages they had earned on their last job on the island.

The upward curve of income with length of residence is apparent from the following comparison of average weekly earnings:

- for those who came during the post-war years, \$34.60;
- for those who came during the war years, \$37.50;
- for those who came during the depression decade, \$37.10;
- for those who came before 1930, \$43.30.

11. Per Cent in the Labor Force - Forty-three (43) per cent of the 5,000 Puerto Ricans in the households we studied were in New York's labor force in March and April, 1948. This is 8 per cent higher than the proportion economically active on the island in 1947, when 35 per cent of the total population were working or seeking work, according to an estimate by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

III

SELECTION OF MIGRANTS

The Puerto Ricans who migrate to New York are a selected group. They are not typical of the total island population in literacy, rural or urban origin, occupations and skills, among other aspects.

a selected group

12. Educational Selection - The migrants in our sample have completed, on the average, 5.5 years in school. Comparable figures for the educational level of the island population are unfortunately not available; but there is strong indication that the New York group has had more education than the island group. For example, in our sample only 7 per cent were illiterate, contrasted with 32 per cent on the island in 1940. These are, however, mostly older people. Among the New York group forty-five years or younger, illiteracy is negligible -- 1 per cent -- compared with 17 per cent of this age group who were illiterate in San Juan in 1940.

5.5 years in school

only 7% illiterate

Illiteracy is more common among people over 45. Almost one-fourth (22 per cent) of the New York migrants whom we interviewed in this age group were illiterate. But this, again, is much lower than the comparable San Juan figures, where almost half the people 45 and over (45 per cent) were unable to read or write.

22% over 45 yrs.

- One-third of the 1,113 respondents whom we interviewed (32 per cent) had not finished grade school;
- another third (33 per cent) had completed grade school;
- one-fourth (24 per cent) had had some high school or had been graduated from a high school;
- 2 per cent had had college training or more;
- 7 per cent had had no schooling and were illiterate;
- 2 per cent had no schooling but could read or write.

13. Rural-Urban Selection - It had been supposed that the trek to New York was a continuation of the urbanization trend on the island. But it turns out that in the heavily Puerto Rican areas of Harlem and the Bronx the great majority of the migrants were of urban origin. *79% born in urban centers* Seventy-nine (79) per cent of the 1,113 people we interviewed were born in urban centers in Puerto Rico; 70 per cent had last lived (before coming to New York) in either San Juan or Ponce - the island's two largest cities. On the island as a whole, urban dwellers in 1946 comprised only 36 per cent of the total population. In other words, the migrants represent over twice as high a proportion of city people as there are in the island's population.

14. Occupational Selection - The occupations of the migrants differ substantially from the occupations of Puerto Ricans on the island. Of those among our 1,113 respondents who had been in the island's labor force before they left:

-- 5 per cent had been employed in agriculture; 39 per cent of the total island labor force in 1947 was employed in this industry;

47% employed in mfg.

-- 47 per cent had been employed in manufacturing and processing; only 24 per cent of the island's labor force was employed in these industries.

A similar comparison on the basis of skill, using 1940

census figures for the island's workers, is revealing:

- Skilled workers: migrants, 18%; island, 5%
- Semi-skilled workers: migrants, 37%; island, 20%
- Unskilled workers: migrants, 25%; island, 50%.

It appears that the migrant group includes a relatively high proportion of those who, on the island, had achieved some skill or training.

15. Ill Health - About a third (36 per cent) of the 1,113 people we interviewed said they had been ill during the past year. The greater part of these, 11 per cent of the whole, had suffered from minor respiratory disturbances such as colds, grippe, hay fever, and tonsillitis. Major respiratory illnesses, such as pleurisy, pneumonia and tuberculosis were mentioned by another 4 per cent.

4% = respiratory illnesses as t.b.

Four (4) per cent had had diseases of nutrition and the endocrine glands, including rheumatism, neuralgia, etc. The illnesses reported by the remaining 17 per cent were scattered through eleven other categories of illnesses.

16. Awareness of Welfare Institutions - Awareness of the institutions in the city which offer aid in case of difficulties varies greatly from one field of help to another. Ninety-four (94) per cent of the 1,113 people we questioned were aware of the existence of various health agencies; 50 per cent were aware of places for securing financial help. Of those respondents whose households included children under 16 years of age, 36 per cent knew about facilities for day care of children. Overwhelmingly, knowledge of these institutions came through friends and relatives rather than directly through formal media.

V.

RELIEF

We were interested in learning about the relief situation among our respondents. Our interview schedule contained some twenty questions bearing upon this subject.

17. Clients on the Island - Of the total of 1,113 respondents, precisely five persons had been on relief before they left Puerto Rico.

18. Knowledge of Relief - We asked these respondents whether they had ever heard about relief in New York City: 98 per cent said that they had. Eight (8) per cent had heard about it in Puerto Rico, 90 per cent had learned about it only after they came to New York City.

*90% learned
about
relief
here*

Only eleven people among all the 1,113 cases we interviewed were aware that there is no fixed period of residence required before one is eligible for relief in New York. More than half of the sample (54 per cent) were under the impression that there is a length of residence requirement in the city. The remainder had no information whatever on this subject.

19. Number on Relief - Of the 5000 people in the 1,113 households where we made interviews about 3000 were adults (20 and over).

Six (6) per cent of the total number of these adults were relief cases - 161 persons.

20. When Did Relief Cases Come? - We have been interested to learn whether there has been a tendency for an increasing proportion of Puerto Rican migrants to go on relief. To our knowledge, the only data available on this subject are the following:

- 27 per cent of the 161 relief cases arrived after the war; 28 per cent of all adult migrants came in that period.
- 15 per cent of the relief cases arrived during the war compared with 21 per cent of the adult migrants.
- 58 per cent of the relief cases arrived before the war compared with 51 per cent of all adult migrants.

6%
relief
cases

In short, the small proportion of Puerto Ricans now on relief are much like the great majority of all Puerto Ricans in the city, so far as their time of arrival is concerned. It will be noted that those on relief are less likely to have arrived during the war years; they are more likely to have arrived before World War II. The proportion of relief cases who have entered since the war about matches their proportion in the total adult Puerto Rican population.

21. Sex of Clients - Women account for the greater part of cases on relief: 77 per cent of the 161 relief cases were women. This is in sharp contrast to their ratio among the 3,000 adult household members -- that is, 57-43.

The majority (55 per cent) of these women on relief are widowed, divorced or separated. Of these, 80 per cent have dependent children.

It should be noted that these women with dependent children constitute one of the groups included in the federal Social Security program. That is, funds are provided jointly by the state and federal governments, not by the city, which simply administers them.

22. Age of Clients - With the Puerto Rican group, as with most groups, the relief cases are more likely to be older people. Forty-eight (48) per cent of the people on relief are 40 years old and over; but only 36 per cent of all the adults covered by our survey are in that age group.

23. Travel on Relief - The question has been raised whether Puerto Rican relief clients commonly make visits to Puerto Rico. We had information on trips back and forth to the island for 132 of the 161 present relief cases in the group studied. These data represent, as far as we are aware, the only available information on this point.

Non-relief cases are more than twice as likely to make trips to the island as are relief cases. Four cases (about 3 per cent) of the Puerto Ricans on relief whom we studied had ever made a trip to the island and returned to the city. This compares with 7 per cent of those not on relief who had made such trips.

Fifty-four (54) of these relief cases entered New York since 1940. Of these, not one person had ever made a visit back to the island. Those four relief cases who did make trips had all migrated to New York before 1940. None of them was on relief at the time he made the journey.

24. Family Aid - Puerto Rican family ties are generally as strong as were those in the United States a generation or two ago. Any member of either the immediate or extended family who is in distress can usually count on support from other members. This is an obligation backed up by the mores of the society.

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In this context, it is understandable that 28 per cent of our total sample sends remittances to the island regularly. Among those on relief, of course, the proportion drops considerably; only 6 per cent send money back to the island. Thus 94 per cent of those on relief are in this respect not able to meet any social obligations they might have to other family members as demanded by their folkways. What this means in terms of stresses and strains within the families on relief is something on which one can only speculate.

No relief client sends more than \$5 monthly. The amount of money sent monthly to Puerto Rico by all of our cases currently on relief totals no more than \$40.

We hope that you will let us know your views (a) on our report, which will reach you when it has been duplicated, and (b) on the plan of administrative adaptation we suggest and that (c) you will feel free to specify any questions you may have about the Puerto Ricans in New York. We shall do our best to answer them with the aid of the materials on the subject now available to us.

Sincerely yours,

C Wright Mills
C. Wright Mills, Director
Puerto Rican Migration Study

Clarence Senior
Clarence Senior
Associate Director

Table No. 9

Projects Approved Under Aid Program
P.R. Industrial Development Co.

Applicant	Date	Approved by Board of Directors	Appropriations	Workers to be Employed	Guaranteed Annual Payroll
<u>Active Projects</u>					
<u>Constructed:</u>					
Red Cap Leather Production Corp.	2-21-46	\$ 76,630	250	\$ 100,000	
Ponce Candy Industries	12-27-45	40,000	88	41,000	
Laboratories Terrier	5-1 -47	60,000	48	62,000	
<u>Under Construction:</u>					
Rio Grande Art Flower Corp.	10-9-46	50,000	200	56,760	
Ramón Luis López Irizarry (Candied Fruits)	3-3-47	30,000	58	30,000	
<u>Approved and Construction Pending</u>					
Metal Products, Inc.	10-30-45	42,200	58	49,900	
Cortin Laboratories	7-18-46	85,000	100	80,000	
Viqueira Hermanos (Chocolate Candies)	7-18-46	42,000	70	42,000	
Caribbean Plywood & Plastics	9-30-46	300,000	1,400	767,000	
Los Angeles Potteries	3-3 -47	100,000	97	150,000	
M & B Headwear & Co, Inc.	3-3 -47	100,000	140	90,000	
Gum Products, Inc.	3-3 -47	125,000	205	124,000	
Jordán & Co. (Jewelry)	4-2 -47	100,000	148	100,000	
De Luxe Dye Works	5-26-47	35,000	11	8,112	
Total		\$1,185,830	2,873	\$1,700,772	
<u>Under Consideration:</u>					
Pedro Cortés Forteza		60,000	44	63,632	

Tables 7, 8, 9-- Source of Information: PR Industrial Development Company.

Through the program of the P.R. Agricultural Company, the Government has aimed toward the commercial development, to the highest possible grade, of all agricultural resources of the Island.

Although the great majority of the means toward the objectives of the Agricultural Company are still under experimental stage, some progress have been attained. Among this can be mentioned:

(1) Establishment of a Pilot Plant for the manufacture of candy and ice cream using native agricultural products.

(2) Cigar factory under construction for the manufacture of cigars with Puerto Rican tobacco.

(3) Experimenting with "Smooth Cayenne" pineapple variety and future establishment of a cannery for the industrialization of the product.

(4) Development of livestock using pure-bred animals for the development of well adaptable dairy animals, as well as for beef production.

(5) Development and improvement of distribution and marketing of food products grown and processed in the Island, so as to increase returns to the farmers and reduce prices and increase quality to the consumers at a price level that would also be fair for private merchants.

(6) Development of a fisherie industry in Puerto Rico to cut down on the imports, increase protein factor in the Puerto Rican diet, help to improve the living conditions of fisherman and try to develop export markets for canned and frozen fish.