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## The class and gender dimensions of Puerto Rican migration to Chicago

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE CLASS AND GENDER DIMENSIONS  
OF PUERTO RICAN MIGRATION TO CHICAGO

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

BY

MAURA I. TORO-MORN

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

MAY, 1993

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### VITA

The author, Maura I. Toro-Morn, was born on December 12, 1961 in Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico. She is the daughter of Rita J. Segarra and Gilberto Toro Camacho. She attended elementary school in Cabo Rojo, graduating from Luis Munoz Marin High School in 1979. She holds a Bachelors of Arts in Political Science from Interamerican University (1983), San German, Puerto Rico and a Masters of Arts in Sociology from Illinois State University (1985), Normal, Illinois. She has taught sociology at Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois since 1988.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This is a study about the migration and settlement of a group of Puerto Rican women to Chicago. It is based on interviews collected in the Puerto Rican community of Chicago. This study enhances our understanding of Puerto Rican migration to the United States, and in particular to Chicago, because it starts from an otherwise silent and neglected voice in much of the literature, namely Puerto Rican women.

When I started this study I wanted to know what compelled women to leave the Island and how they managed the move. I was also intrigued to know how they managed to recreate and maintain family life once in Chicago. What kinds of problems did they face? How did they resolve them? Studies of immigrant women have shown that irrespective of the circumstances of their entry, women become wage laborers in their new countries. For some women, the new jobs in the United States is their first labor market experience. Others simply continue patterns already initiated in their countries of origin. Given this dynamic, a number of questions emerged concerning Puerto Rican women's migration and involvement in Chicago's labor market. Have Puerto Rican women followed the work pattern of other immigrant women? Or have they followed work patterns already initiated in the Island? What have their experiences as wage



laborers been like in Chicago? Has their work conflicted with their domestic responsibilities? If so, how do they managed this conflict?

In this study I do more than simply add women's experiences as migrants to the existing literature. My objectives are to examine how women of different class backgrounds have entered the migration process and the adaptive strategies they have used in Chicago. By placing women at the center of my analysis I am able to describe their contributions to both family and the community life. I situated this analysis historically, placing the stories of Puerto Rican women migrants and their strategies in a political economy which often constrict choices.

My choice of topics and many of the questions I began with were a result of my own family history. Many of the women in my family migrated to the United States, and, although most eventually returned to Puerto Rico, their experiences raise a number of questions about the levels and extent of women's involvement in the migration process. As I turned to the available literature, I found that the experiences of Puerto Rican women were largely missing. I also found that though Chicago is the second largest Puerto Rican community in the United States very little material is available about Puerto Ricans in the city, be that male or female. In the next pages, I selectively review the general literature on Puerto Rican migration and the few studies that concern themselves with

Chicago's Puerto Rican community. I pay particular attention to what has been found concerning Puerto Rican women migrants and indicate how this literature informed and shaped the focus of this study. I also review the more recent literature on women's migration which aims to contribute to a gendered understanding of the migration process.

### Literature Review

#### Puerto Rican Migration Literature

The literature reveals that there was some traffic between Puerto Rico and the United States prior to the United States takeover of the island in 1898.<sup>1</sup> But the most sizable movements began after 1898 as the island's political, educational, and economic systems underwent modifications under the impact of the new colonial power.<sup>2</sup> There is considerable agreement among students of Puerto Rican migration on the first two waves of the migration process: (1) the pioneer migration from 1917-1945; (2) the post World War II migration from 1946-to the late 1960's. Of these two movements, the postwar migration has received considerable attention. In particular, abundant studies have focused on the New York City experience and the problems Puerto Ricans encountered there (see, for example, Mills, Senior, and Goldsen, 1950; Rand, 1958; Handlin, 1959; Fitzpatrick, 1971, 1987). One problem within this literature is that very few studies take gender issues into consideration. Also, lost in the literature on

Puerto Rican migration is an understanding of the migration process from the perspective of the migrants. Given that the largest movement took place after World War II, students of Puerto Rican migration offer no consistent periodization to the present. Some argue that migration has become a "revolving door" phenomenon (Rodriguez, 1989); while others, argue that in the 1980's Puerto Rican migration has become a brain drain (Baerga and Thompson, 1990).

The Pioneer Migration. A number of studies have documented the arrival and settlement of Puerto Ricans from 1917 to the 1940's (see for example, Chenault, 1938; Handlin, 1959; Glazer and Moynihan, 1963; Sanchez-Korrol, 1983A). During this period, Puerto Ricans migrated to New York City where job opportunities awaited them. These early migrants have been described as young men and women of predominantly working class backgrounds (Handlin, 1959; Glazer and Moynihan, 1963; Sanchez-Korrol, 1983A). From 1910 to 1920, the number of Puerto Ricans living in the United States increased from 1,513 to 11,811 persons. By 1930, the sex ratio was almost evenly distributed between males (53%) and females (47%). Twenty-six percent of this population were classified as "colored".<sup>3</sup> As of 1930, Puerto Ricans tended to concentrate in certain areas of New York City like Manhattan (34,715), Brooklyn (7,460), Bronx (1,273), Queens (745), and Richmond (190) (Chenault, 1938).

Chenault's (1938) study, in particular, provides some

valuable insights about this first wave. He discussed the social effects of migration, in particular the kinds of problems such movement entailed, and provided valuable information about the strategies migrants used to make the move to New York.<sup>4</sup> He found that kinship and friendship regulated the flow of migrants from Puerto Rico to New York. For example, almost everyone had some friend or relative, or knew someone who had come to New York and secured employment. Migrants wrote to family and friends about the city or talked of it on periodic visits to the island. According to Chenault (1938:52),

[As] soon as persons who are here can provide passage, one by one the others come. Often the family in Puerto Rico is broken by the migration, and the cost of the trip for the first member who comes may be met in part by selling most of the households goods or other belongings of the family. In the more prosperous years, it was easier for a woman than for a man from Puerto Rico to secure work here. A married woman might leave her family and come to New York where she could live with friends until she secured work, at which time she would send for her husband. Later, arrangements would be made for friends who were coming to bring the children. Finally, the father and the mother, and sister of the wife or husband might come and live with the family... it is customary for Puerto Ricans to share whatever they have with relatives who had just arrived and also to help other relatives migrate, this method of migration may continue indefinitely.

Such descriptions point to not only how kinship networks enabled migrants to make the move, but most importantly, the role of Puerto Rican women in such networks. At the turn of the century New York's labor market favored women's work, especially in low-skilled menial jobs. For migrant families this determined who migrated first. Chenault found that as early as 1930 the Department of Labor of Puerto Rico had

established an employment agency in New York to help Puerto Ricans in the process of finding jobs. From 1930-36, over 16,000 Puerto Ricans had registered at the agency. Of the 5,600 who found work through the agency, sixty-five percent were women. Women found work as domestic workers, in the needlework and garment industry. On the other hand, men found work in the paper and leather industry, construction, hotel industry, and as porters and errand boys.

Sanchez-Korrol (1983A) remarks that a sense of the importance of the early "pioneros" who laid the groundwork for the futures waves of migration is missing from most of the research. She shows that an identifiable migrant community of "bodegas" (grocery stores), boarding houses, restaurants, formal and informal support networks, and other organizations were established by the these "pioneros". Sanchez-Korrol's (1983A) study is the first to take seriously the experiences of Puerto Rican women. Sanchez-Korrol (1983A) argues that Puerto Rican women held a special place in the early settlements in New York City, providing links between the island and mainland communities which helped in the maintenance of Puerto Rican culture, language, and customs. Women were expected to fulfill their traditional roles as wives and mothers as they had done in the island. Sanchez-Korrol (1983A) found three profiles among the women of the early colonias: (1) "the traditionalist", which consisted of a large group of predominantly wives and mothers who stayed home as dictated by Puerto

Rican gender roles; (2) the "working mothers" who had to combine family responsibilities with employment outside the home; (3) the "colonia activist", a small group of white-collar professionals who worked with community organizations.

Although the "traditionalist" saw themselves as primarily "mujeres de la casa" (lady of the home), many found ways to contribute to the financial support of their families by participating in income generating activities such as: piecework, making or decorating lamp shades, artificial flowers, jewelry, embroidery, among others. Dona Clara, a migrant from Cabo Rojo, who describe herself as a "mujer de la casa", stayed home to raise her children but took on piecework to supplement the family income. Like most migrants, she had learned needlework and piecework skills in Puerto Rico prior to moving to New York. The skills not only provided income earning opportunities but also provided a basis for social interaction with other women thus developing a network of information and exchanges. Sanchez-Korrol (1983A) found that these women recognized the values and disadvantages of piecework, but many preferred it rather than working outside because they had children who needed care. Other income generating activities included taking in lodgers and caring for neighborhood children. These activities helped women form networks to help in the process of adaptation. According to Sanchez-Korrol (1983A:98)

Child care tasks previously undertaken by relatives defaulted to friends and acquaintances outside the

kinship network who provided the services in exchange for a prearranged fee. A grass-roots system of day care was born from the merger of working mothers who could ill afford to lose job security or union benefits and women who remained at home.

These child care practices in the early colonias were strongly influenced by Puerto Rican family values and rituals of kinship. The "compradazgo" (godparenthood) is a family practice which helped developed a sense of obligation, support and commitment among men and women going beyond friendship bonds. The "hijos de crianza" (informal adoption) guaranteed that children within an extended family circle were always assured of a home, food, and other basic necessities. Taking in lodgers not only provided supplementary incomes, but also strengthened family and friendship bonds. Lodgers came from the same hometown. Single men and women migrants utilized this system the most and many recalled meeting their future husbands and wives as lodgers. Sanchez-Korrol (1983A) found that it was not unusual for women migrants to come to New York alone, since they were often met by relatives who had either invited them to come or were prepared to assume responsibility for them after arrival.

The second profile had to do with those migrant women who had to combine work outside the home with traditional family responsibilities. In the 1920's, close to twenty-five percent of the female population participated in labor force as cigar makers, domestics, typist, in laundries and restaurants. For these women to work was not considered a luxury but a natural

extension of their work at home. Language problems and the troublesome intricacies of transportation in the city made work outside the home difficult. But women found ways around such problems. Some took English classes others memorized their routes to work. Vazquez Erazo's (1988) interviewed a retired garment workers in New York City and found that her work experiences had helped defined her status and sense of worth as a worker. (1)

The "colonia activist", as Sanchez-Korrol (1983A) called them, were white collar professionals and volunteers who served as spoke persons and became known for their dedication to the community. These women held jobs which required some degree of academic preparation, like clerical positions. They played a very important role in the cultural and educational life of community life. Sister Carmelita Bonilla, for instance, was the first Trinitarian nun from Puerto Rico who served as an intermediary between the Puerto Rican community and the social agencies seeking to help migrants. Eloisa Garcia Rivera, on the other hand, became involved in politics and higher education. She helped her husband bid for the Albany legislature.

As Sanchez-Korrol's (1983A) research indicates paying attention to the lives and experiences of the women of the early colonias offers a different view of early Puerto Rican migration and life in New York City. Even though Puerto Rican women continued to play a very important role in the migration



and community building process, no such account exist for successive migration waves.

The Great Migration. The migration that began at the end of World War II and extended into the mid-1960's has been called "the first airborne migration" (Stevens-Arroyo and Diaz-Ramirez, 1982, Rodriguez, 1989). Airplanes reached New York from San Juan not in weeks, but in a matter of hours. In this period, the largest numbers of Puerto Ricans left the island to come to the United States. Although estimates vary, in the decade from 1940 to 1950, net migration from Puerto Rico was nearly 180,000 persons (Dietz, 1987:227).

The significance of the post World War II migration is that it took place at a time when the government of Puerto Rico launched "Operacion Manos a la Obra" (Operation Bootstrap), a modernization program aimed to industrialize the island and improve the welfare of the population (Rios, 1990). Operation Bootstrap is the oldest model of what we have come to know as an "export promotion" development model (Pantojas, 1990). In implementing Operation Bootstrap the government assumed a position of mediator in the management of the local economy and through tax exemptions and other incentives it aimed to attract capital investors. As Falcon (1991) observes, while Operation Bootstrap did generate employment it was also accompanied by serious limitations. Industries were small and required low-skilled labor which increased the demand for female workers. In addition, labor-intensive industries are

sensitive to international competition and as new sources of cheap labor became available in Asia and along the Mexican border, industries left Puerto Rico. But the major problem was that not enough jobs were created and that migration had to relieve the discrepancy between the model of economic development and the supply of labor. In other words, although Operation Bootstrap generated an average of 3,500 manufacturing jobs per year, that did not match the jobs lost to agriculture which averaged 6,000 per year. During the 1950's, seventy percent of those who left were between the ages of 15 to 39 years old or potential members of the labor force (Dietz, 1986). Although the post war migration was predominantly a working class movement, they came from the campos (rural areas), the pueblos (urban centers) sponsored by other relatives and/or as contract workers.

The migrants of the postwar period continued coming to New York City, where by this time, a relatively stable community had formed. But, a pattern of dispersion began to take place as Puerto Ricans moved to less well-known places outside New York. This is when Puerto Ricans started coming to Chicago. After New York, Chicago became the preferred city of settlement. As New York City's labor market declined, Puerto Ricans looked to Chicago for jobs opportunities. Also, news about potential employment opportunities in Chicago spread around the island after the recruitment of several men and women as contract workers in the late 1940's. Puerto Ricans

have been residents of Chicago for the last forty years, yet very little is known about their arrival and adaptation process.

Padilla's (1947) doctoral dissertation is the first account of the Puerto Rican experience in Chicago. She compared the Chicago and New York City communities in terms of their assimilation process. In Chapter V she provides a description of the city's Puerto Rican population prior to the mass migration of the 1950's. She divided the population into: "old migrants" and "new migrants". The old migrants were a group of eighty-six Puerto Ricans, their spouses, and their children who lived scattered throughout the city. Of these, only thirty-four had been born in the island. She argues that strictly speaking they did not represent a community because they did not relate to one another in any way. In fact, many did not know that other Puerto Ricans lived close by. She found ten families scattered in the suburb of Oaklawn, a group in the North Side, and two smaller groups close to the black and Mexican community respectively. The population was small and diverse in terms of class and racial background. A group of highly educated migrants had come to Chicago as young unmarried adults with the purpose of continuing their education and ended up staying. They tended to live in predominantly white neighborhoods, spoke English and talked about wanting to live in Chicago permanently. They talked about the island but only to claim relationship to old and wealthy Spanish

families who because of some misfortune lost their wealth and prestige. They also showed prejudicial attitudes toward Blacks and darker Puerto Ricans. A male informant talked about how he had selected Chicago because he knew that laborers and Puerto Rican blacks could not come there. Those working class and poor Puerto Ricans living close to the black and Mexican community presented a different picture of their experiences in Chicago. Padilla states that they knew about segregation from personal experiences and that in reflecting about it they, like Blacks, rebelled, rejected and resented it. In terms of marriage tendencies, darker Puerto Ricans did not marry Blacks. She found a school teacher married to a Cuban mulatto, a musician married to a Brazilian, and a bachelor engaged to an Italian-American. There were four black Puerto Ricans living close to the black community but they did not know each other. The "recent migrants" consisted of 594 contract workers who came to Chicago in 1946. At the time she conducted the study she found that many of the contract workers had abandoned their jobs and had moved into the Mexican neighborhood. I gather that she did not interview the contract workers and instead focused on the lives of four individuals from the early group: J.J. Groccio, Luis Hortas, Laura Rondon, and Yolanda Torres.<sup>5</sup>

Laura was a black Puerto Rican who had been in Chicago since 1935. She came from a well off family. As the daughter of the mayor, she had gone to the University of Puerto Rico

where she received a Normal School degree. She came to Chicago via New York. In New York, while living with her sister, she met a dark Cuban whom she later married. The same year she married, they came to Chicago where her husband planned to open a law office. When Padilla (1947) caught up with them she was teaching Spanish in a commercial school. Laura talked about her interest in the political problems of the island and her dislike of Mexicans and American Blacks. Padilla (1947) does not elaborate about these feelings.

Yolanda Torres, on the other hand, lived close to the Mexican community along Ninth Street. Yolanda was also described as a dark Puerto Rican. In 1933, she came to New York with her aunt to work as a seamstress. In the house where she lived she met a Mexican family who planned to move to Chicago because according to the family there were better job opportunities than in New York. They invited her with her aunt's permission to come along. She lived with the family until she married one of the relatives who worked in the steel mills. When her husband lost his job Yolanda supported the family, but this eventually lead to a divorce. They were married for three years. At the time Padilla interviewed her she described her as living isolated from people.

Maldonado (1979) not only links contract workers to the origins of communities outside New York, (in Buffalo, Philadelphia, Camden, Lorain, Chicago and Gary,) but also aims to present a more coherent picture of the recruitment of contract

workers. He argues that although the recruitment of contract labor began in the 1920's preceding the first wave of migration, these workers have received little attention because many returned to Puerto Rico after their contracts expired.<sup>6</sup>

During World War II, companies came to the Island to recruit workers for cities and states outside New York. The recruitment of unskilled workers started in May, 1944, in response to critical war time labor shortages, when eight-hundred-fifty-eight workers came to work as contract workers. They were distributed throughout the United States.<sup>7</sup> A second group of six-hundred-eighty came in June, 1944<sup>8</sup>, and a third of over six-hundred followed in July. Approximately sixty percent of these workers left their contract employment prior to expiration and stayed looking for other jobs. Maldonado (1979:113) found that many of these agents turned out to be unscrupulous and cites numerous charges of mistreatment and irregularities. Problems ranged from taking workers where they were not needed, to charging a fee to both employer and employee, and to selling suitcases, clothing, and other merchandise. But, the most serious problem was luring potential workers with false promises of jobs as bait for the sale of airline tickets.

In 1947, the migration of several hundred Puerto Rican men and women who were recruited for domestic and foundry work in Chicago created a storm of controversy (Padilla, 1947, Maldonado, 1979). Puerto Rican foundry workers received \$.88

per half-an-hour a rate establish by the contract between the Chicago Hardware Foundry and the United Steel Workers of America. But, after many deductions a standard check shrunk to a few dollars a week. Puerto Rican men were housed in old passenger coaches on company property. Foundry workers lacked warm clothing and were ill fed. Food consisted of three slices of bread for lunch, three for dinner, and corn flakes. Those who were injured on the job and hospitalized, found the medical expenses deducted from their checks. Among the women recruited for domestic work, similar problems existed. I will address these issues in Chapter II.

Padilla's (1987) work is perhaps the most comprehensive study about Puerto Ricans in Chicago. He argues that given Puerto Rico's status as a colony, in migrating to the United States colonialism is transported to mainland communities through both institutional and individual means. At the institutional level, internal colonialism means that Puerto Ricans exist in an exploited condition which is maintained by their lack of control over the institutions which affect their lives. He argues that a process of decolonization began when Puerto Ricans asserted their self-pride and attempted to gain control over their own communities.

Of relevance to this study are Padilla's (1987) claims about the migration process. He first describes the movement of Puerto Ricans to Chicago as "involuntary" as he pays more attention to the structural forces determining the migration

process. Such analysis is problematic because it removes the individual as a social actor in a multiplicity of roles and circumstances shaping the migration process. But, when describing who migrates and why, then, only men become social actors initiating the move. He describes the settlement of Puerto Ricans in Chicago as initiated by single and married young men mainly from the campos (rural areas) of the Island who came to Chicago looking for work. Married men would make the journey alone, and after a few years, would send for their wife and children. Thus, making women visible as followers and in the context of a man's migration. He bases his claim on the belief that men were more likely to migrate because of a long-standing patriarchal tradition in Puerto Rican society which made it unthinkable that a single woman would travel abroad. He correctly looks at the patriarchal structure of Puerto Rican society as a possible explanation, but underestimates the ability of women to negotiate these roles and incorporate themselves in the migration process. In Padilla's (1987) book we see only how Puerto Rican men construct their lives and women remain invisible and marginal. Although Padilla's (1987) research has contributed to our understanding of the Puerto Rican experience in Chicago, his omission of the experiences of Puerto Rican women presents an incomplete picture. In reconstructing the Puerto Rican experience in the United States, Padilla relies on sociological constructs developed with other racial minorities in mind, thus leaving out Puerto



Rican's own understanding of the situation. Most importantly, the perspectives of Puerto Rican women have also been left out of the literature. If they are present, we see Puerto Rican women as wives and helpmates, and only visible when they enter the labor force. Looking at how men and women from different class backgrounds enter the migration process offers a picture that is more realistic and inclusive. Furthermore, in incorporating the woman's side of the story, it brings out issues neglected by the exclusive focus on men. In this study, I present a picture of Puerto Rican migration and settlement that treats women as social actors not as passive recipients and takes into consideration their contributions to their families, work, and communities. In the same fashion as more recent studies on immigrant women, this study seeks to examine the gender and class dimension of Puerto Rican migration to Chicago.

### Gender and Migration Literature

Recently, there has been a surge of scholarly interest on immigrant women (see for example, Ewen, 1985; Diner, 1983; Lamphere, 1986, 1987; Glenn, 1986, 1987). Although women have always participated in population movements (Tyree and Donato, 1986), suddenly newspaper reports are calling women the "new immigrants".<sup>9</sup> Feminist have made important contributions to making the experiences of immigrant women visible. In addition, they have begun to transform the conceptual and theoret-

ical frameworks of the field.

Stacey and Thorne (1985) have identified the stages involved for a feminist transformation of knowledge in a discipline. First, there is the initial period of filling in the gaps to correct sexist bias and create new topics out of women's experiences. Then, there is what they call a "paradigm shift" or changes in the assumptions and conceptual frameworks basic to the discipline. In sociology, feminist have done extensive work in uncovering and filling gaps in sociological knowledge. But when compared to other disciplines such as history, literature, and anthropology, sociology has been slow to move on to the paradigm shift stage. The same problem presents itself in the study of migration.

The first wave of research on immigrant women helped to fill in the gaps<sup>10</sup> but there were some theoretical shortcomings. One problem was that this new research did not break with the traditional individualist approach but rather continued to analyze women as if their decisions to migrate were determined by their individual motives and desires (Morokvasic, 1983).<sup>11</sup> Consequently, a very important question was left unanswered: how, then, do we account for women's migration? Should women be treated in the same conceptual framework as male migrants or does female migration require separate analysis?

Recently feminist scholars have begun to correct some of the problems left unresolved by the first wave of research on

women's migration. To begin with, feminists argue that immigrant women's experiences require separate analysis because their relationship to market and non-market conditions is unique (Glenn, 1986). Immigrant women's place in the labor market is shaped by class and their statuses as immigrants and racial/ethnic minorities, and such intersection creates a particular and distinct experience. Glenn's (1986) study of Japanese women's immigration describes how despite generational differences Japanese women shared a similar treatment by the dominant society as their life chances were to a great extent determined by ethnicity. Their work experiences were shaped by a labor market stratified according to race, gender, and migrant status. Issei and Nisei women found themselves as domestic servants whereas the war brides went into semi-skilled operative or service jobs. But at home Japanese women confronted a basic dilemma:

their reproductive labor maintained the family as a bastion of resistance to race and class oppression, while at the same time it was the vehicle for their oppression within the family (1986:193).

In the community, immigrant women played a critical role in the building and maintaining of ethnic culture. Although women started out in peripheral roles in the organizational life of the community, over the years Japanese women emerged as the "prime movers" in the community. By combining a political economy approach, cohort history, and individual biographies, Glenn (1986) offers a detailed and dynamic perspective of

Japanese migration and settlement. Thus, helping to understand the way in which racial/ethnic groups are incorporated into and move within the labor system at different stages of capitalist development.

Others, like Lamphere's (1987) comparative study of immigrant women, have begun to examine the intersection of gender, class, and ethnicity. In the process of describing how the labor force of Central Fall, Rhode Island, went from one composed of working daughters to one composed of working mothers, Lamphere shows the range of tactics and strategies women created to deal with their jobs, their families, and the changing industrial order. At the turn of the century the labor market needs of Central Fall were filled by young, unmarried immigrant women from French Canada, Ireland, Poland, Scotland, and England. Immigrant families adapted to industrial capitalism by carving out different niches in the local economy. In the more "mature" ethnic communities such as the English, French, and Irish, young unmarried daughters worked at middle-level jobs in the mills as spinners, winders, twist-ers, and weavers. In the newer Polish ethnic communities, married women expanded the household and took in boarders, while single women and childless married women worked in the mills and boarded with other families. Family strategies for allocating productive and reproductive labor did not change the gender division of labor in the home. After World War II, however, changes in immigration laws brought Portuguese and

Colombian women to southern New England. Portuguese families were able to immigrate using the preference system established by the Immigration Act of 1965. Male kin networks were important in arranging for the initial visa and housing. Portuguese immigrants spread over a number of industries such as jewelry, wire-processing plants, apparel, and textiles. Colombian immigrants came to Central Falls recruited specifically for textile work. For Colombian men who came on labor contracts, access to a job and housing arrangements came through the recruiting process. Usually, wives and children immigrated after their husbands were settled. Given their migration process, Colombian families often felt isolated and without the help of kin whereas Portuguese women had the benefit of siblings and parents to ease their adjustment to New England. But, both Colombian and Portuguese women were similar to the extent to which wives had to take jobs in the paid labor force since their husband's wages were insufficient to support an immigrant family. Lamphere (1987) found that among Colombian families the ideology surrounding family relationships changed to accommodate the wife's employment in a way that was compatible with the husband's authority and his role as provider. In both groups, as Portuguese and Colombian women began to take wage jobs, the gender division of reproductive tasks in the home also changed. The set of activities that changed the most was child care. But, very little changes took place in the reallocation of reproductive labor concern-

ing housework.

Hondagneu-Sotelo (1992) takes a different route to understanding how gender shapes the migration and settlement experiences of Mexican immigrant women. Through interviews with Mexican immigrant women and their husbands, she explored how family stage migration altered patterns of patriarchal authority and the traditional gendered division of labor toward a more egalitarian conjugal relations upon settlement in the United States. Kibria (1990) also interviewed Vietnamese women to examine the effects of migration on gender roles and power. She found that migration had a contradictory impact on the status of Vietnamese women. On one hand, migration weakened men's control over economic resources and allowed women to exert greater informal family power. But, at the same time, the precarious economic environment in which families found themselves constrained the possibilities for radical change in gender relations.

Another emerging theme in the more recent literature on migration links the recruitment of women into labor migrations to the changing relations between developed and underdeveloped countries. Grasmuck and Pessar (1991) studied how changes in the political economy of the Dominican Republic lead to differential power relations between household members and to the development of a migration stream to the United States. As the Dominican Republic went from subsistence farming to commercial farming, it made women more dependent on their

husbands. One way families dealt with these changes was to sponsor the wife's migration to the United States where she was in a better position to contribute to the family income. For Dominican women, migration becomes a way of escaping total dependence upon their husbands. Grasmuck and Pessar (1991) found that a struggle developed between husbands and wives over issues of finances and return migration. Men sought to restore traditional gender roles and privileges by returning home, whereas women resisted returning because it meant losing financial independence and new-found freedoms.

These studies help us understand how gender intersects with class and ethnicity to create different experiences in the lives of immigrant women. Most importantly, these studies bridge the gap between agency and structure, a task that has eluded most students of migration. By beginning from the women's point of view and relying heavily on interviews, oral histories, or ethnographic accounts feminist researchers have explored the complexities of immigrant women's experiences within structural arrangements that limit and constrict choices. I take a similar approach here to study Puerto Rican migrant women in Chicago. In the next pages, I describe the methodological approach and theoretical frameworks undertaken in this study.

### Methodology

This study is based on fifty-one oral-histories collected

between March 1989 and July 1990. Most of the interviews were conducted in Chicago's Puerto Rican community which comprises the areas of West Town, Humboldt Park, and Logan Square.<sup>12</sup> I selected interviews because they "provide an invaluable means of generating new insights about women's experiences of themselves in their worlds" (Anderson and Jack, 1991:11). I participated in community activities prior to beginning my fieldwork and interviews in order to gain access to the women in the community. I went to activities sponsored by the Puerto Rican Parade Committee, such as the ethnic parade and the "fiestas patronales". I also attended other cultural events such as poetry readings and cultural exhibitions. Getting to know the community in this way was useful because I learned about the different groups involved in its organizational structure. It also allowed me to become more sensitive to the divisions between community groups.

The first group of interviews revolved around a newly organized grass-roots women's group that I encountered at a community event. The organizer was an energetic second-generation Puerto Rican woman, Cecilia<sup>13</sup>, who told me that something needed to be done to empower Puerto Rican and other Latina women to become more self-supportive. One way she sought to empower women was through helping them get their high school diploma. She founded an organization of predominantly Puerto Rican women, although in its focus the organization aimed to encompass all Latina women. She persuaded me



to get involved and helped them. I deal with the implications of this issue in a methodological note included in Appendix A. At the time I got involved, there was Cecilia, her mother, another young second-generation Puerto Rican woman, a Puerto Rican man, and a Colombian woman. Eventually Cecilia and her mother, Iris, would be interviewed for this study. Attending community events with Cecilia allowed me to get to know closely the more organized and visible segments of the community. She explained to me who was who in the community. She introduced me to the President of the Puerto Rican Parade Committee, members of the clergy, and business people. Throughout my research and community involvement Cecilia became a good friend, confidant, and ally. I believe Cecilia has also an important story to tell about her experiences growing up in Chicago but that is not the focus of this study.

As a non-for-profit organization Cecilia's Group<sup>14</sup> relied on private foundation money to run a GED (general education degree) program and an employment referral system. They received a lot of help from a larger umbrella organization which helped them learn the ropes in the non-for-profit world of Chicago. Through them I met Vilma who helped me understand the various political groups in the community.

While attending another community activity I met Ada who had just recently arrived from Puerto Rico sponsored by her church. When I went to interview Ada, she introduced me to Rosa. Using informal snowball sampling techniques Cecilia

helped me find other women. She introduced me to Aurea, Norma, Amanda, Ines, and Victoria. Victoria, in turn, introduced me to her mother. I met Rosita, Angelica, and Magdalena through community leaders. Another friend introduced me to her mother. I found Josefa, Julia, Marisa, and Lucy through my students at Illinois State University. After the interview was finished I asked each women for the names of friends and acquaintances whom they would recommend. Most respondents named three to five potential informants. In order to introduce some diversity in the sample, I followed only two names offered by each respondent.

The interviews were conducted for the most part in the informants' homes and lasted between one to three hours. Generally, interviews were in Spanish. I began each encounter by introducing the project. The interview questions were organized around a series of themes: migration history, family, work, and community experiences. The interview schedule is reproduced in Appendix B. The demographic profile of the respondents both at the time of migration and the time of the interview is presented in Appendix C. All interviews were recorded with the informants' permission. I transcribed each interview in Spanish and printed a copy for my files. Since I am bilingual this did not present any problems. I recognize, however, that the issue of translation raises a number of questions which I try to address in the methodological appendix.

Being Puerto Rican and bilingual helped me in other ways. As older migrant women rarely spoke English, conducting the interviews in Spanish facilitated the exchange. By the same token, being fluent in English allowed women to use the language with which they felt most comfortable. Sometimes the interview started in Spanish and ended in English. On other occasions, women switched back-and-forth between Spanish and English. Anderson and Jack (1991) describe how a woman's discussion of her life may combine values that reflect men's dominant position in culture and their more immediate realities. Inadvertently, women may mute their own thoughts and feelings when they try to describe their lives in the familiar and acceptable terms of Puerto Rican culture. That is why in order to hear women's experiences accurately, we have to learn how to listen, as Anderson and Jack calls it, "in stereo". Listening in stereo means receiving and clearly tuning both of these processes. In at least three interviews, women broke down in tears reflecting about their personal experiences. Culturally, I understood this was a form of expression and something very natural for a Puerto Rican woman. Sometimes my fear of talking about painful issues prevented me from going further into their stories.

The most serious problem I encountered was that working class women were convinced that they had nothing to contribute to the study. Such humble backgrounds convinced them they had made only humble contributions. I had to spend time convincing

them that their lives and experiences were indeed important. Some asked me if I worked for the welfare department. To persuade them that I was not a threat I told them that a lot of people held negative stereotypes about Puerto Ricans. My work would prove them wrong in that I hoped to show how Puerto Ricans adapted and struggled in the city of Chicago. I told them that very few people knew exactly what kinds of hardships Puerto Rican women went through with their families in Chicago. Some women, like Rita, loved to talk. Others, like Luz and Carmen, were more interested in feeding me or marrying me off to one of their sons.

Professional and highly educated women were more open but they also presented problems. While I had to convince working class women to talk to me, professional women "quizzed" me about my motives. In two occasions, I had to submit to an interrogation period prior to beginning the interview. Some doubted I was even Puerto Rican and asked why I had selected this topic. I always prefaced my comments stating that "as a Puerto Rican woman and a migrant myself" .... Professional and educated women when confronted with personal questions they did not want to answer ducked them and gave me "funny" answers. When I had established a rapport, I waited and asked them at another point during the interview. But, when I noticed that they wanted to maintain a distance, I did not pursue the topic.

### The Women

At the time of the interview, sixty-one percent of the respondents (33) were married, eighteen percent (9) were divorced, twelve percent (6) were single and four percent (2) were widowed. As far I can determine the youngest respondent was 26 years old and the oldest was 65. Eleven respondents were in their sixties whereas sixteen were in their forties and fifties. Their educational background varied a great deal as well. Nine respondents had not completed their high school education. Thirteen respondents, however, had completed their high school education. Eight respondents had finished four years of college. Two respondents had a doctorate degree.

While the women were very diverse in terms of their demographic characteristics, three discernable groups of women emerged. The first group consisted of those whose migratory experiences made them part of a generation of mostly working class women, with little education, who came to Chicago for the most part in the 1950's and 1960's. Generally they were married-or soon to be married-and had children. Josefa, Lucy, Luz, Rita, Daniela, Carmen, Alicia, Nellie, Teresa, and Asuncion belong to this category. Agnes and Victoria belong to this category, even though they came in the late 1960's and 1970's. Laura and Lupe-single and working class-, Leida and Iris-divorced women with children-also belong to this group.

Professional educated women who started to arrive in the late 1960's represent a second group. Their experiences are

markedly different from the first generation migrant women as they came with college degrees, most of them childless, and with different goals. They are Julia, Brunilda, Amanda, Lisa, Aurea, Magdalena, Yolanda, Ines, Myrna, Marisa, Sandra, and Vilma. Most of the respondents went to University of Puerto Rico, except Yolanda, Sandra, and Marisa who went to private universities in Puerto Rico. Vilma and Ines migrated to the United States as students and completed their education in Wisconsin and Kansas respectively. Daughters represent a third group who came to Chicago as children with their mothers or were born in the Puerto Rican community of Chicago.

Appendix C list the towns and cities where migration originated in Puerto Rico. The largest number of respondents came, in descending order from San Juan, Ponce, and Arecibo. But, the migration is not selective of large cities, San Lorenzo a small city in the southern region and Lares a small city in the mountain region also sent their share.

### Theoretical Framework

In developing the theoretical framework for understanding Puerto Rican women's migration to Chicago I draw from two major areas of empirical and theoretical work namely, immigration and feminist theory. My aim is to capture men and women as actors actively devising strategies and social structure as delimiting and enabling. In the next pages, I briefly describe the major theoretical assumptions underlying this study.

## Women as Strategists

My framework for the analysis of Puerto Rican women's migration begins from the perspective that sees women as actors engaged in devising means to realize goals be that their own or their families. Like Lamphere, I also adopt an observer's definition of strategies as patterns that the analyst is able to abstract from interviews, observed behavior, or comments on everyday life (1987:30). Within a framework of women as strategist it is useful to distinguish between strategies of resistance and those of coping and accommodation. Lamphere (1987:30) defines strategies of coping and accommodations as those used "in the allocation of productive and reproductive labor". For Puerto Rican working class families, the husband's wage alone could not have supported the entire family. In coping with this problem Puerto Rican women entered the labor force, although not permanently. This strategy of reallocating the wife's labor raises a number of questions about the gender division of reproductive labor. Were child care practices altered in any way? Were there any changes in the allocation of household tasks? Were there any class differences in the strategies Puerto Rican migrant women used to deal with the allocation of reproductive labor?

Lamphere (1987) defines strategies of resistance as tactics and actions, along with shared beliefs and concepts that workers use to undermine their employer's control of the workplace. I do not confine strategies of resistance to the

workplace exclusively. My research shows that as Puerto Ricans entered a society stratified along race, gender, and class, an area which called for the development of resistance strategies was securing a place to live. Puerto Rican working class families developed different strategies for dealing with housing discrimination.

There can also be resistance as individuals within particular social arrangements. Aptheker (1989:173) extends the idea of strategies of resistance to apply it to women's everyday experiences. She argues that women's resistance is not necessarily or intrinsically oppositional. It does not necessarily involve contesting power. Instead, women's resistance comes out of women's subordinated status to men, institutionalized in society and lived through every day in very personal ways. Or as she put it,

shaped by the dailyness of women's lives. It comes out of the sexual division of labor that assigns women responsibility for sustaining the lives of their children, and in a broader sense, their families, including husbands, relatives, elders, and community.

I found a great deal of resistance as some women confronted traditional gender roles arrangements transplanted from the island and reproduced in Chicago to provide continuity in the migrant's family and community experiences. The strategies women developed were relative to their situation and to the tools and resources they had available.

Like Lamphere (1987), I do accept notions of rationality and utilitarian behavior, but I carefully placed these within



a political economy which constricts choices. The use of the strategy approach combined with some insights from the literature on migration are helpful in understanding Puerto Rican women's experiences, in particular the larger political economy in which many of their strategies take place.

### Structural Perspective of Migration

For a long time the dominant theory in the study of population movements viewed migration in terms of push and pull factors. Equal weight was given to conditions in the country of origin that force people to leave and opportunities in the country of destination that attracted people (Glenn, 1986). Migration was the result of rational choices pushing individuals to areas where industrialization opened new economic opportunities, attractive wages, and better working conditions. The characteristics of migrants and the human capital they brought with them explained the positions they held in the host economy. This model has been criticized because of its reductionism at the expense of broader structural forces that can compel the decision to move.<sup>15</sup>

An alternative perspective emerged in the 1960's as scholars in both Latin America and the United States converged to challenge traditional push and pull, and modernization theories (Portes and Bach, 1985; Glenn, 1986; Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991). In the 1960's, scholars explored the complexities of the structural conditions linking labor migrations from peripheral countries to the core. In particular, Andre

Gunder Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein argued that rapid industrial growth in the West could not have taken place without the incorporation of a periphery from which economic surplus was extracted and raw materials secured. Gunder Frank argued that the "development of underdevelopment" happened because the world capitalist system was characterized by a metropolis-satellite structure (Brewer, 1980). In essence, the relationship of exploitation of the satellite by metropolis concentrates surplus in the metropolis.<sup>16</sup>

An important issue within this framework is how core economies deal with labor scarcity. Sassen-Koob (1981A) argues that one way core economies have dealt with a shortage of labor is by using foreign workers. But the use of foreign labor has taken different forms depending on two major factors: (1) the country's place in the international division of labor; and (2) the particular mode of specialization prevalent at a given time in the world system (Sassen-Koob, 1981A). Furthermore, to understand the initiation of a new migration flow it is necessary to examine the conditions promoting out-migration in countries of origin as well as the subjective linkages with receiving societies that make migration possible. To understand why a migration flow continues requires an examination of the demand conditions in the receiving country. The structural framework of migration helps to capture the particular conditions that link a country in the periphery to the global economy.

As a colonial enclave, Puerto Rico has supply its share of workers to the United States economy. But, the conditions have not always been the same. In 1898, as the United States became the new colonial power radically changing the island's political and economic structures, capital investments transformed Puerto Rico from a dual-crop economy into a sugar export economy (History Task Force, 1979).<sup>17</sup> Sugarmills owned by American companies became the center of the productive process. Then, internal migration became the way of life for Puerto Ricans moving from the mountainous inland areas to the coastal canefields and urban tobacco factories in search of jobs.<sup>18</sup> As a colonial enclave, Puerto Ricans did not have to leave the island to provide the United States with cheap labor. By transferring parts of the production process to the island, the United States secured a constant supply of cheap labor. It was not until the passing of the Foraker Act (1900) and the Jones Act (1917) that Puerto Ricans started migrating to the United States.<sup>19</sup> Given the restrictions placed on European immigration, Puerto Ricans, along with Blacks migrating from the rural south, supplied the much needed cheap labor for industry.

In the 1940's, once again the impact of U.S. investment and modernization of the economy changed Puerto Rico's role in the international division of labor. Operation Bootstrap transformed Puerto Rico from a predominantly agricultural to an industrial economy. This model paved the way for the

widespread use of export processing zones in the new international division of labor (Rios,1990:332).<sup>20</sup> In the late 1940's, Puerto Rico became a major immigrant-sending economy while also being recipient of manufacturing companies relocating to export processing zones. One of the biggest misconceptions about Operation Bootstrap is that it is an undifferentiated model of export-led development (Pantojas, 1990). In fact, as the needs of global economy have changed so has Puerto Rico's role as a colonial enclave. These changes in the development model have prompted the involvement of other sectors in the migration process, in particular highly educated and skilled Puerto Rican men and women (Baerga and Thompson, 1990)

But, an exclusive focus in the structural conditions producing labor migrations risks losing sight of individual migrants who do make decisions and underestimates other non-economic reasons which can draw men and women into migratory movements. A critical problem within the structuralist literature of migration is that for the most part women are invisible. Gender enters the analysis of migration only when women become workers in export manufacturing zones. As Sassen (1988) argues, given the highly unstable working conditions of export processing zones, women, like men, join the ranks of the unemployed thus entering with men in labor migrations. While empirical evidence suggest the growing importance of women in global migrations, this model also presents a rather

narrow view of what constitutes labor migrations by ignoring other ways in which gender can play a role in migratory movements.

I argue that a more satisfactory analysis should broaden the definition of what constitutes labor migrations to include not only the productive role of women, but most importantly, the reproductive dimension as well. Feminist have argued that in order to understand women's status within capitalism one must pay attention to the interaction and/or contradictions between women's reproductive activities (housework and child care, among many other things) and women's role as wage earners. For instance, in the case of working class married Puerto Rican women, the language of motives they used to describe their migration process does not fall easily within any of the theoretical orientations in the study. Instead, working class married women saw migration as an extension of their roles as wives and mothers. In this case, I argue that not all migrations need to relate to productive (economic) activities. In defining what constitutes a labor migration, the work of women who migrate and do not necessarily join the labor force but stay and do the reproductive work which supports families and immigrant communities should be included within this framework. In this category there are women who migrate as wives, as grandmothers, or as relatives and whose major responsibility is to help with the reproductive tasks-be that housework or child care-of their own families and/or

their extended families. The conceptualization of labor migration as an activity which can involve both productive and reproductive work moves the level of analysis beyond questions of whether women migrate for the same reasons as men and puts gender at the center of the analysis. Thus, providing a better perspective of the role gender plays in labor migrations.

### Overview

In Chapter II, I describe how in the context of a changing political economy migration becomes a strategy for working class families. At the beginning, Operation Bootstrap affected poor men and women who opted for contracted work in Chicago homes as domestic workers or in the city's foundries in the late 1940's. I pay particular attention to the recruitment of domestic workers because it suggests that possibly women had other agendas when they moved to Chicago as contract workers. Interviews suggest that working class women and their families came to Chicago as part of a family strategy to deal with shrinking economic opportunities in Puerto Rico. Some important differences emerged when looking at the marital status of respondents. Married working class women moved as family units and in rigidly gendered ways as wives followed husbands, or daughters followed parents. Single women, on the other hand, came under similar circumstances as married women. As in Laura's case some do the reproductive work of caring for other family members. Lupe's case suggests that economic and

educational aspirations of her own pushed her to Chicago. Respondents accounts suggest that economic pressures were not the only reason bringing working class Puerto Rican women and their families to Chicago.

In Chapter III, I examine how and why educated and professional women entered the migration process. The chapter opens with a discussion of the changes that began to take place in the political economy. In the 1960's, as the development program moved from a labor intensive to a capital intensive phase, migration became a way of life for Puerto Ricans across class backgrounds. Like working class families, educated and professional women used migration both as a strategy for confronting shrinking economic opportunities at home and as a way of dealing with personal problems. But, their education afforded options and choices not accessible to working class women. Like in the 1950's, the formal recruitment of migrants continued. This time, however, a teacher recruitment program that brought Amanda to Chicago responded to the needs of the Puerto Rican parents, not American employers. In this chapter, I also explore how second-generation educated Puerto Rican women when faced with problems of their own also utilized migration as a strategy.

In Chapter IV, I focus on the work and family experiences of working class migrant women and their families in Chicago. Getting settle<sup>d</sup> in Chicago was no easy task. Here, I advance the argument that once in Chicago, given the different family

arrangements within which women traveled to Chicago, families, and women in particular, developed other kind of strategies. Here I distinguish between strategies of coping and accommodation and strategies of resistance. Living with the same relatives who facilitated the move was one means Puerto Ricans families used in the process of coping to secure a place to live. These arrangements were problematic for some women and as they fought to change them they began to stand up to their husbands forming a strategy of resistance. Work outside the family by these women became a strategy for surviving and improving their economic position. Here, I discuss how many husbands accommodated to their wives temporary employment but that did not change the traditional division of labor in the household. In turn, women had to developed strategies to accommodate their roles as working wives. Marital problems also called for women's strategies.

In Chapter V, I focus on the work and family experiences of educated Puerto Rican women migrants in Chicago. Like the working class migrants, educated women developed strategies to cope and accommodate, both as families and as individuals, in the process of adjusting to life in Chicago. The strategies they developed in many ways reflected their class position. In juggling family and work, educated and professional women placed their career goals alongside their family responsibilities. In Chapter VI, I conclude by presenting a summary of the research findings organized around a series of thematic



issues. I also attempt to place the experiences of Puerto Rican women migrants in a larger comparative framework with other immigrant women and explore the theoretical issues this study has raised. The chapter ends with a discussion of the limitations and suggestions for further research.

NOTES

1. Sanchez-Korrol (1983A) states that prior to the Spanish-American War, some migratory patterns existed between Puerto Rico--then a Spanish colony--and the United States. She found that the these migratory movement consisted of: merchants, students, revolutionaries, and some field and factory workers. Despite Spanish mercantilist policies, Puerto Rican merchants managed to exchanged sugar and molasses for basic food staples with New England and Pennsylvania merchants. The sons and daughters of these merchants, in turn, came to the United States as students. New York, in particular, had been a safe sanctuary for political revolutionaries plotting Puerto Rico's independence from Spain.

2. For example, in 1917 the Jones Act was passed giving Puerto Ricans American citizenship. This changed Puerto Ricans status from "immigrant" to "migrant" and sanctioned population moves between Puerto Rico and the mainland.

3. This classification is of considerable importance given the inconsistencies in the United States Census of Population in accounting for racial variations among Puerto Ricans. Of importance here is the imposition on Puerto Ricans of the U.S. racial order. In other words, upon entering the United States Puerto Ricans feel like "immigrants" but they are treated as a racial group. Rodriguez (1989) called this the dominance of racial over cultural identification.

4. The book is divided into two major parts. The first part is devoted to describe the conditions in the island and the movement to the United States. The second part describes the Puerto Rican Worker and his family in New York.

5. All fictitious names given by Padilla (1947).

6. Hawaii came to Puerto Rico to recruit labor for the cane fields. In 1926, when restrictive immigration laws which made the recruitment of Mexicans difficult, 581 Puerto Ricans were brought to Arizona to cultivate and pick cotton.

7. Maldonado (1979:111) states that 758 went to the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad of Baltimore, Maryland. Then, assigned to work in groups of sixty to work in camps in New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Indiana, and Ohio.

8. These went to work on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, the Campbell Soup Company, Camden, New Jersey and the Utah Copper Company on June, 1944.

9. For instance, see Chicago Tribune Tempo Section, Sunday, October 7, 1990.

10. For a detailed description of this research see Morokvasic (1983).

11. In part this problem grew from the framework of analysis which developed from the studies of men. Leeds (1976), for instance, opposed the use of "women" as an analytical category because he thought it encouraged a reductionist and individualistic outlook. He believed that most migration literature was based on the wrong assumption namely that of willing individuals rationally calculating a move. Migration, Leeds argued, needed to be understood as decisions made by corporate groups, personal networks, and kin groups. In such cases the individual had little say in the matter. He further argued that to use women as an analytical category would be futile because it reified notions borrowed from neoclassical economics. In other words, by using the "individual migrant" as an analytical category migration theory evades all the structural realities of migration and reduces them to epiphenomena. Leeds (1976) criticisms, however, were directed more to the problem of integrating agency and structure and in arguing for the structuralist perspective of migration.

12. As of 1980, West Town had twenty-four percent (28,469) of the Puerto Rican population of the city and surrounding areas (116,597), followed by Logan Square with twenty-percent (23,792) and Humboldt Park with fifteen percent (17,769).

13. In order to protect the identities of my informants and comply with university regulations all of the names used henceforth will be pseudonyms. I used first names only because I thought it would be less confusing.

14. Given I have not acquired permission from Cecilia, nor the current executive director of the organization to write about them, I'm not in the position to name the group. From now on the group will be referred to as Cecilia's Group.

15. For detailed critiques of this model see Wood, 1982; Portes and Back, 1985; and Glenn, 1986.

16. Wallerstein divided the world system into three tiers of states: core, semi-periphery, and periphery. For Wallerstein, state power rather than the market is the central mechanism which allows the transfer of surplus from the periphery to the core. Once in place, the core/periphery division is maintained by the ability of core states to manipulate the system to suit their needs.

17. According to the History Task Force (1979), one of the first changes introduced by the new colonial power was to replace the cultivation of coffee and tobacco with sugar which was the most attractive. Sugar was not only needed in the United States but also represented the most favorable terms of trade.

18. This pattern of migration was established when Puerto Rico was a colony of Spain. Puerto Ricans gravitated westward and inland to take up work in coffee plantations, returning seasonally to the coastal canefields (History Task Force, 1979).

19. The Foraker Act (1900) was one of the first legal documents legitimizing many of the changes introduced by the new colonial power. For instance, it facilitated the appropriation of production-in particular land-, devalued the Puerto Rican peso, and placed tight restrictions on local credit operations. The Jones Act (1917) gave Puerto Ricans American citizenship. This law also required obligatory military service in the armed forces of the United States. In other words, as Puerto Ricans migrated to the United States they were not encumbered by immigration requirements.

20. The beginning of the so-called off-shore processing plants is always ascribed to the 1960's when Fairchild opened the first electronic plant in Hong Kong. Rios argues that Puerto Rico's model of development was already in place a decade earlier than Fairchild's.

## CHAPTER II

### REASONS BRINGING WORKING CLASS WOMEN TO CHICAGO

#### Introduction

In the 1940's, the impact of U.S. investment and modernization of the economy transformed Puerto Rico from a predominantly agricultural to an industrial economy. Operation Bootstrap-as the development model is popularly known-is one of the oldest export promotion models that paved the way for the widespread use of export processing zones in the new international division of labor (Rios,1990:332).<sup>1</sup> In the first stage<sup>2</sup>, the development model attracted labor-intensive light manufacturing industries to Puerto Rico like textiles and apparel by offering tax incentives, cheap labor, and easy access to U.S. markets. This strategy accelerated the entrance of Puerto Rican women into the labor force as has been the case for women in other industrialized areas of the world (see for example, Boserup, 1970; Fernandez-Kelly, 1983, Nash and Fernandez-Kelly, 1983, among others). A significant percentage found employment in the manufacturing and service sectors of the economy, particularly as operatives in the apparel and textile industries (Acevedo, 1990). It also accelerated the internal migration process of poor and working class Puerto Ricans who moved from the rural to the urban centers looking

for jobs (Dietz, 1986; Pantojas, 1990).<sup>3</sup>

As the development model was unable to create enough jobs, working class Puerto Ricans began to leave the island to familiar places like New York City or new places like Chicago. One way Puerto Ricans managed the move to Chicago was as contract workers. In the first part of this chapter, I examine Puerto Rican women experiences as domestic workers in Chicago. This recruitment linked Puerto Rico and Chicago in distinctive gendered ways. Here, I discuss a letter from an employer that, although not necessarily from the Chicago area, raises a number of questions about other agendas women may have had as they took contracted work in Chicago.

The oral histories I have collected for this research suggest that over the years working class women and their families used migration as a strategy for dealing with both economic and personal problems. Within this group, there are some important differences by marital status in the reasons women gave for coming to Chicago and the routes they took. In particular, when analyzing the interviews of working class married women the language they used to describe the move did not easily fall within any of the theoretical orientations in the study of migration. Instead, married working class women talked about migration as a family project. They talked about how in the 1950's, husbands learned about jobs and opportunities in Chicago through friends, family members and relatives who also helped them migrate. For them migration

took place in stages. Husband moved first, secured employment and housing arrangements, and sent for the rest of the family later. Given traditional gender roles in Puerto Rican culture, women left the island to be with their husbands even though some reported to have been working before leaving. Their responsibilities as wives and mothers took precedence over their role as wage earners. Some women, like Teresa and Agnes did experience the effects of Operation Bootstrap in a direct way since they were unemployed and looking for work at the time of migration. In fact, once in Chicago, they entered the labor force although temporarily. I will address this issue on Chapter IV. In addition to her husband's unemployment, Josefa had a handicapped child needing special assistance. Nellie was the only respondent within this group of wives who followed their husbands to Chicago, whose migration did not originate in the Island. Nellie came to Chicago from New York City because her husband was running away from the police.

In general, whether for economic or other reasons, working class married women move to Chicago in a "rigidly gendered"<sup>4</sup> way as they followed their husbands. Students of population movements often are very quick to dismiss as uninteresting women who follow their husbands because they assume that these women do not have reasons of their own to migrate. In this study, however, underlying the story of how working class married women followed their husbands to Chicago lies a more complex story of how women dealt with the move and

how migration changed them. While some resisted migration by moving back-and-forth between Chicago and Puerto Rico, others developed complex strategies to deal with the move.

When Milagros stated "it was my mom's decision to come to Chicago... Puerto Rican parents never consult their children about decisions like that" she was, in effect, describing another "rigidly gendered" way Puerto Rican women came to Chicago, namely as migrant children submitting to the authority of both parents, or a widowed mother as it was her case. When interviewing their mothers, daughters usually interrupted the interviews to talk about how they felt about moving to Chicago. I have included their stories here because they not only corroborate the story of married women, but also tell us about how divorced and widowed women with children used migration as an economic strategy as well. As heads of families, they also left their children behind and worked to save the money to send for them.

Daughters first entered the migration process following their parents but, as adults when faced with problems of their own, they also resorted to migration, thereby creating migration patterns of their own. Rosita is a case in point. She had moved to New York City when she was a child. She soon dropped out of school to start working. When her mother began to insist it was time for her to get married, she fled New York City for Chicago.

The migration of single working class women suggest some



interesting dynamics as well. Laura migrated to Chicago under similar gender specific ways (i.e., to take care of a brother who had fallen ill). But, Lupe's case illustrates that some single women came with economic aspirations of their own. Lupe wanted to go to nursing school in Chicago. She too used the family network to make the move but, once in Chicago her brother's over-protectiveness prevented her from pursuing her personal goals.

Finally, there is a group of women within the working class sample, who used migration as a strategy for dealing with marital problems. Vicenta moved to escape an abusive husband. Leida had just divorced when she moved to Chicago and Iris left the island when she was abandoned by her husband.

A commonality these accounts share is that regardless of the reasons and situations leading to migration, the family network was a very important factor in facilitating the process. Massey (1987:5) argues that it is such a complex web of family relations which enables a movement to developed an infrastructure and become a mass phenomenon. He adds that over time, the number of social ties between sending and receiving areas grows, creating a social network that progressively reduces the costs of movement. People from the same family, neighborhoods, or city are enmeshed in a web of reciprocal obligations helping other migrants to find work in the receiving society. These networks expand and encourage more migration. Massey (1987) adds that the once these migration

networks are put in place they tend to become a self-sustaining social process affecting individual motivations, household strategies and community structures.

### The Domestic Workers

The exact number of workers recruited to do domestic work in Chicago has never been known. In October, 1946 an island-based newspaper, El Mundo, reported that an employment agency (Castle, Barton, and Associates) had hired a number of airplanes to transport over 100 Puerto Rican women domestic workers to the U.S. In Chicago, two days later, the Chicago Times announced the arrival of 150 domestic workers and estimated that over 5,000 Puerto Ricans were willing to come to Chicago. A report dated November 25, 1946, stated that since the recruitment started, the number of Puerto Rican girls placed in Chicago homes was close to 300. The same report goes on to state, based on women's account, that on two occasions two different groups of workers were assembled in front of the Department of Labor in San Juan just before leaving for the airport. There they were read the contract and told to sign it.<sup>5</sup> Some women admitted that they had lied about their ages in order to get work.

Government agencies in both Puerto Rico and the United States facilitated this recruitment<sup>6</sup>, but the central force was a private employment agency, Castle, Barton and Associates, with offices in Miami, Pittsburgh, Chicago, and in

two locations in Puerto Rico: San Juan and Ponce.<sup>7</sup> Private citizens in Chicago contacted the agency and paid \$210.00 for each employee's transportation as well as a fee to the employment agency. In a chart attached to the contract the employer described the desired age, height, weight, sex, status of prospective servant and type of services needed from the domestic worker.<sup>8</sup>

Domestic workers were hired to serve as a cooks, maids, clothes washers, nursemaids, and for general housework. They were expected to move with their employer if necessary, to be "clean and neat" at all times, and to refrain from using the employer's residence for entertaining. The contract contained a description of the employers responsibilities as well as the responsibilities of the employment agency. The employer agreed to "furnish suitable living quarters and with food and meals" during the entire term of the contract and to provide uniforms if necessary. The contract was for one year. In the contract, there was no set amount for the salary but domestic workers were generally paid \$60.00 per month.<sup>9</sup> Transportation from San Juan to Chicago was paid initially by the employer, with small amounts deducted from the monthly check as reimbursement. Employers also took \$100.00 for the transportation back to Puerto Rico. A total of \$18.33 was deducted monthly to cover the transportation cost, leaving a net salary of \$41.67 a month or \$500.04 for a year.<sup>10</sup> In an effort to bound women to their contracts, the employment agency held the money in

escrow until the expiration of the contract or the cessation of employment.

Correspondence from San Juan to Washington show that there were a lot of problems in this domestic business. In fact, many were serious enough to be brought to the attention of the Women's Bureau, which issued a report entitled, "Statement on Puerto Rican Household Workers", on February 7, 1947. The report suggested that approximately 400 Puerto Rican women and girls had been brought to Chicago. It added that the workers felt they were exploited through long hours and low wages. Women were asked to work up to fifteen hours a day and were denied any "day off". Others reported that they were only allowed five hours of free time on their day off. The wages they received was significantly lower than the prevailing wages for United States citizens doing similar work. In Chicago, a domestic worker earned \$80.00 a month for a 50 hour week. Additional hours would be only by agreement and were not to exceed 60 in a week. This situation led to dissatisfaction among the Puerto Rican women, some of whom failed to honor their contracts. Employers felt there were

difficulties of youthfulness of the girls, inexperience, lack of training, unfamiliarity with modern household equipment, and with customs and work tempo in the United States, inadequate prior health examinations, lack of funds and of winter clothes.

A letter addressed to the United States Department of the Interior, dated September 12, 1947, from an employer in the Philadelphia area confirms the kind of expectations American

employers had about Puerto Rican domestic workers.<sup>11</sup> In the letter, an employer, Mr. Smith, describes Rosita Rodriguez, who was hired through an agency, as ill-prepared for the work she was to do.

Señorita [Rodriguez] arrived at our household in a most destitute condition, devoid of warm clothing and extremely underfed. We employed her to our satisfaction at our household for the months of May, June, July, although she had little experience in our type of requirements. Fortunately, Mrs Smith who has lived in South America, was able to converse in the Spanish language, as the girl had no knowledge of English, as we were told.

Toward the end of July, a man came to their house claiming to be Rodriguez's husband. According to Mr. Smith, the man "besieged her with telephone calls several times a day to the general annoyance of our household. Conversations were always very loud and very excitable". Apparently, Rodriguez's husband had followed her to Philadelphia, on his way to New Jersey as a contract worker.

When the family returned from their summer vacation, Rosita's husband appeared on their door-step and demanded to talk to her. According to Mr. Smith,

Consequently, the two of them went off together after a couple of hours of much noise and confusion to the general amusement of the neighborhood. She returned the next day, in our absence, moved out her possessions, most of which had been acquired through our assistance and apparently joined her so-called husband in Philadelphia. The next day, she reappeared at our house and Mrs. Smith paid her all pending wages. She reported that she was now employed in a sugar factory in the center of the city.

I relate these circumstances expecting that the proper authorities will investigate the situation as we are convinced that the girl entered into this contract with the premeditated intent to defraud...

The situation should be investigated by the proper authorities to ascertain the intent and purposes of this couple as we feel they are a definite menace to society if not properly apprehended. ...

When the girl came to us originally, two Puerto Rican investigators called at our home to ascertain the circumstances under which the girl was employed, now I feel the same people should acquaint themselves with the outcome. Puerto Rican domestics should not be turned loose in the country without definite supervision.

Rosita's story, at least as revealed through the eyes of her American employer, strongly suggests that Rosita had work experience but marital problems were a cause for migration. Rosita's story brings up other issues as well. For example, Rosita left domestic service eventually to work in a U.S. factory and did not return to Puerto Rico. How common was domestic service a route to factory employment? How representative were Rosita's problems with domestic work? How did the contrast in familiarity with work processes of a factory and a U.S. household affect women's perspectives in their employment?

The "Chicago experiment"-as the migration of domestic workers to Chicago was known to government officials-was used as an example of the potential that such projects had for alleviating the island's population and unemployment problem as well as the shortage of domestic workers in the United States. In fact, the Emigration Advisory Committee was formed in Puerto Rico in 1947 to further discuss such emigration proposals. Chaired by the secretary of labor, Fernando Sierra Berdecia, it included top-level political figures such as

vicente Geigel Polanco, Luis Munoz Marin, and Teodoro Moscoso and academicians such as Clarence Senior and Rafael Pico.<sup>12</sup>

Jesus T. Pinero, Governor, wrote to Rex Lee, the Acting Director of the Division of Territories and Island Possessions in the Department of the Interior, stating, "we have given considerable thought to emigration possibilities since I took office and now that we are beginning to get supporting data from the University [of Puerto Rico] and from O'Connor. I want to get started on a flexible program which can be geared to the job opportunities trends and other variable factors in the United States and, whenever possible, in Latin American areas". Pinero enclosed a document prepared by Social Science Research at the University of Puerto Rico entitled: "Suggestions for an Experiment in the Placement of Household Workers"<sup>13</sup>. This document makes reference to the "Chicago experiment" as the model program.

Donald O'Connor, economist for the Office of Puerto Rico in Washington, argued most forcefully for more recruitment and training of domestic workers. In a letter to the Puerto Rican Commissioner of Education, Mariano Villaronga, dated April 1, 1947, he wrote "aside from birth control, the most effective means of reducing the population of Puerto Rico is emigration, primarily of women of child-bearing ages". O'Connor's success can be measured by the fact that the government established a school for the training of domestic workers in Puerto Rico. An article in the May, 1948 issue of the Labor Information

Bulletin, headlined, "Household Workers from Puerto Rico Arrive in New York: First Group in Island Government's Project go to Scardale". The article detailed the history of the project known as the "Caguas Project". The training program consisted of classes taught by home economics teachers graduated from University of Puerto Rico. Instruction began in November, with students attending classes from 3:30 to 6:30 five days a week, with graduation in January as a goal. Young women learned the basics of cooking, housekeeping, child care, and English, while studying the habits and customs of American families.

The hiring of Puerto Rican women as domestic workers needs to be seen within the context of domestic service as an occupation that has always relied on the work of immigrants and women of color. At the beginning of this century, Irish immigrant women entered American homes despite the widely held prejudice among employers that they did not know how to cook and clean (Diner, 1983). When Black women replaced immigrant women as domestic servants, the nature of the work changed as well. The shift to day work made it possible for domestics to work for more than one employer at the time (Romero, 1992).

Just as has been the case for other women of color, labor shortages brought Puerto Rican women into domestic service. But unlike other women of color, Puerto Rican women did not stay as domestic workers for long. As Rosita's case suggest, some women used domestic work to move on to factory work.



domestic work, however, continues to be an occupation of racial/ethnic women. In the last few decades, Haitians and Chicanas have joined the ranks of domestics alongside Black women (Romero, 1992).

The migration of Puerto Rican women as domestic workers is important because it links Puerto Rico and Chicago in distinctive gendered ways. It shows how as the export-oriented stage of the development program is being implemented in Puerto Rico, some workers are becoming superfluous to the productive process and opting to leave the island. An important factor here is the government campaign to move low-skilled women to the United States as a way to deal with the unemployment and population problems. In moving to Chicago as domestic workers, the productive and reproductive spheres of women's work intersected in the migration process to create a particular experience. In the next section, I continue to explore other ways in which gender affected the migration process as told by the women I interviewed.

### Married Women

Within the sample of working class women, the most typical migrant was a married woman following her husband. In fact, of the twenty-three women who came to Chicago in the 1950's, eight—Josefa, Lucy, Luz, Rita, Daniela, Teresa, Laura, Asuncion—fit this profile. Once in Chicago, married women either joined their husbands in the factories or remained full

time homemakers.

Working class single men left their future brides in Puerto Rico returning to the island to get married as soon as they were able to afford it. For example, Rosie's mother came to Indiana, to join her husband who worked in the steel mills. He had been recruited for his job along with other workers in Puerto Rico. Once at the mills, the men often found better jobs. According to Rosie,

my uncle came to work at Youngstown, Ohio. He did not like it and eventually came to Indiana because he had some cousins who were working in the steel mills. My uncle sent for my father and my father came. By that time my uncle was dating my aunt. Then, my father started corresponding with my mother. It's two brothers that married two sisters. They wrote letters, sent pictures.

Then, my father went to Puerto Rico and met my mother. That was around 1951 or 52. He asked my mother to marry him and he came back to Chicago. My uncle did the same thing. They went to Puerto Rico together, to propose, then they came back and to set up their little apartments and whatever and they went back to Puerto Rico and got married. My parents got married Nov 22, 1953. And my aunt and uncle got married Nov. 28, 1953.

Others arranged for the future brides to join them in Chicago. Alicia's explanation show how these decisions took place within the family context.

My husband and I were neighbors in San Lorenzo. Before he left to come to Chicago he had demonstrated an interest in me. Initially, I did not accept him, because I did not want to get married so young. We started corresponding and I agreed to the relationship.... In one letter he asked me to marry him and come to live with him in Chicago. I told him that he needed to ask my father's permission... He wrote to my father but my father did not agree ... it took some convincing by my cousins who were coming to Chicago so that he would let me come and get married. My cousin took it upon himself to be responsible for me and that's how I came. Within two weeks of getting

here we got married.

Lucy, Luz, and Asuncion were working when their unemployed husbands decided to move to Chicago. Lucy and Luz worked in apparel factories and Asuncion was a secretary. They moved because economic opportunities seemed better for their husbands. For others, like Teresa and Agnes, both husband and wife were looking for work, when news about Chicago came via relatives visiting the island. A nephew who had moved to Chicago, was visiting Puerto Rico, and talked about the availability of jobs. The situation in Puerto Rico was bad, they could not find jobs at home,

I was so tired of looking for work and not being able to find anything. I was married, and after I had the first girl, I tried to get some work, but I could not find anything. My husband the same. One day, my husband told me that perhaps if we moved to the states that maybe our luck will change.

Similarly, Agnes also followed her husband in 1970 after a cousin who was visiting from Chicago convinced them that there were better job opportunities for both of them in the Midwest. She was unemployed and he had just been laid-off as the pharmaceutical company he worked for closed the Puerto Rican subsidiary.

Lucy, Asuncion, and Victoria initially struggled over the decision to migrate. Fear of the unknown bothered Lucy. In addition, with a baby in her arms, and pregnant with a second child, Lucy did not have anyone to help her in Chicago. But, accompanied by her sister and her youngest child, Lucy followed her husband to Chicago in 1951. Shortly after her

arrival, her mother and sister-in-law followed. Her mother took care of the children while Lucy, her sister, and sister-in-law worked.

Asuncion's husband could not find a work in Puerto Rico so he came to Chicago with his relatives. Asuncion, who had a job as a secretary with the government, took a vacation from work and came to visit.

My family started talking about how they were recruiting case workers in the welfare office that could speak Spanish. They all had connections there and could very easily help me a get a job. In fact, I went just to try it ...

Asuncion gave in to the pressure and started working while still holding her job in Puerto Rico.

I used up my vacation with pay time and asked for more time but without pay. My boss in Puerto Rico was really nice he wanted to give me the chance just in case I wanted to return to Puerto Rico. I worked in the welfare office for six months, but I had so many problems, I wanted to go back. Life here is really different when compared to the Island's. I was really confused. I cried a lot. I had left my children behind and I missed them a lot....

In fact, Asuncion went back to Puerto Rico because she missed her daughters, but uncertain about what would happen to her marriage. She remembered how she felt when her husband took her to the airport

I really did not know whether I was going to see him again. He wanted to stay here and start a new life. I really did not care about what would happen to us and our relationship I thought about my daughters. I owe it to my mother that my marriage was saved. After I returned to Puerto Rico she sat me down and told me that my place was to be with my husband. That he was a good man and that my place was next to him. That I had to think about my children growing up without a father So, I returned again.

Obviously, as Asuncion's case illustrates, she struggled over whether to save her marriage and her responsibilities as a mother. Ultimately, moving to Chicago meant maintaining the family and saving her marriage.

Victoria's story is somewhat similar. She was living in her home town of Ponce when she fell in love with the son of a family who had come for a visit from Chicago. Young and inexperienced, she became pregnant and in keeping with Puerto Rican culture she was forced to marry him. Without consulting with Victoria, his parents sent him a ticket so that he could return to Chicago. Once in Chicago he expected she would follow.

I did not want to come,... One day he sent me a ticket for me and my baby girl. I sent it back because I did not want to come. But he send it back again. So I had to come... I had no idea where I was going, I had lived all my life in Ponce and had never left Ponce. I was so scared that I asked my brother to come with me.

In 1966, she followed her husband to Chicago against her will, but she took along her brother. He was, as she described him, her "security blanket". They offered each other company but, they still had a hard time adjusting.

The emotional and cultural shock was very strong. We sat on the edge of the bed and cried our eyes out. We felt like we had been punished. In Puerto Rico, you are always outside and carefree. Here, we lived in small apartments, we could not go outside. We could not open the windows. We did not know the language.

She was so intimidated with Chicago that during her pregnancy with her second child, she asked her mother to send a plane ticket so that she could give birth in Puerto Rico. Within

less than a year she had returned to Puerto Rico. Eventually her husband joined her but, he was not happy and he began to disappear and neglect his responsibilities as a father. In one of his escapades he went back to Chicago. Once again, he sent for her. But, this time Victoria had analyzed the situation and it would be different.

I did not have any money to pay rent, electricity, and other bills or even feed my babies. I recognized it was a difficult situation, but I thought to myself that if I stayed in Puerto Rico I had less opportunities to do something with my life. So, I thought that if I returned and brought my other brother with me they could help me and eventually even my mother could come and I could get myself a job. I had noticed that there were factories close to where we lived and my sister-in-law had offered to help as well. My brother who had moved with me the first time had gotten married and brought his wife with him.

Here, Victoria indicates how a married woman who had followed her husband to Chicago actually began to develop her own agenda and use migration as a way to realize it.

Of the women who followed their husbands to Chicago only two (Luz and Rita) complained that once in the city the men failed to fulfill their end of the bargain, forcing the women to use migration as a way to assert their claims as wives. Luz joined her husband to Chicago from Arecibo in 1951. Her husband had just returned from the military when he began to talk about moving to Chicago.<sup>14</sup> Initially he went to Indiana where some relatives helped him find work. When he was laid off, he learned through other friends that there were opportunities in Chicago. He made the move, promising to send for the family once he secured employment. But, according to Luz,

he had been working for some time and had not sent for her and the children. In addition, he was not sending any money to support the family. Instead, her husband kept putting off sending for the family forcing her to confront him. Rita, also had to confront her husband by letter and remind him of his promise to bring the rest of the family to Chicago. Rita with strong emotion even though over 20 years had gone by, stated

I had to write him a letter. Because it had been over a year and he didn't send for me. I had three babies and I was alone. When he left, he said that he was going to send for me shortly and it had been a year and I was still waiting.

He replied that he did not want her to come because living in Chicago was hard, and that she and the children would not be able to adjust to the weather. To which she replied, "either you send the ticket or send me the divorce papers". Apparently, this was a typical problem Puerto Rican women confronted when their husbands preceded them in migration.<sup>15</sup> Juarbe (1988) reported that Puerto Rican women migrants in New York experienced similar problems. Juarbe's (1988) informant, Anastacia, stated that after her husband had migrated he did not want her to come. He had been living and working for over three months and he was not sending any money. He would write but did not send any money. Apparently, she had some money saved and was able to buy the ticket without his knowledge. Anastacia wrote him a letter announcing her arrival.

Nellie lived in New York City when she eloped with a man twice her age. He liked to gamble and shortly after they had

moved in together he got in trouble with the police and had to leave for Chicago.

He was old and a womanizer. Imagine, I had come from Puerto Rico where your said your prayer at 7:00 p.m. and then went to bed. [At this point, she switched to English.] I'm not blaming him, but you know. [Continues in Spanish.] Today that kind of thing would have been prosecuted as seduction of a minor. [Again, she switched to English.] On top of that my problems with mother were getting worst so I got away with him. I was 15 years old and he was 30 years old.

Within six months Nellie joined him. They came to Chicago, where they both had friends and relatives. Shortly after Nellie moved to Chicago her mother and other relatives followed.

### Migrant Children

The next most typical profile within the working class sample are the daughters who followed their parents. Some migrant daughters were too young too remember arriving in Chicago. Others remember only bits and pieces. Many remembered the move to Chicago as being initiated by their father. Mildred, Cristina, Marilyn, Daisy, Haydee, Socorro, and Luisa all moved as children following the family. Mildred at three years old came with her mother Josefa in 1949. Cristina, also three, came with her mother Lucy in 1951. Marilyn came as a baby with her mother Rita in 1951.

Judith Ortiz Coffey, a migrant daughter who was raised between Paterson, New Jersey and Puerto Rico, writes of her early memories in her autobiographical novel, Silent Dancing:



A Partial Remembrance of a Puerto Rican Childhood,

My memories of life in Paterson during those few years are in shades of gray. Maybe I was too young to absorb vivid colors and details, or to discriminate between the slate blue of the winter sky and the darker hues of the snowbearing clouds, but the single color washes over the whole period. The building we lived in was gray, the streets were gray with slush the first few months of my life there, the coat my father had bought for me was dark in color and too big. I sat heavily on my thin frame. I do remember the way the heater pipes banged and rattled, startling all of us out of sleep until we got used to the sound .... (1990:84)

Moving from a house made for a single family, Ortiz Cofer was fascinated to know that there were Puerto Ricans living below and above them in the new apartment building. She adds "my mother was as new to this concept of beehive life as I was, but had been given strict orders by my father to keep the doors locked, the noise down, ourselves to ourselves" (1990:8-4).

Like Ortiz Cofer, some of my informants had vivid, yet fragmentary, first impressions of the day they came to Chicago. Luisa remembered she wore a beautiful yellow dress and that the trip was very long.

I remember I did not like it at all because we were kept in a small apartment. We were never allowed to go outside. It was like they locked us up in our little apartment. Since I came with my brothers and sisters we played all kinds of games, but after a while it was boring. I remember that we drove my mother nuts. She sometimes let us played in the "porche".<sup>16</sup>

Milagros remembered the cold "ahy!! el frio",

the houses looked so small next to the huge skyscrapers. When we landed at Midway, I remember my sister asking, but how is it possible that people can live with such small windows?. Everything was so different. In Puerto

Rico, everything was open air and the houses were all at one level. In Puerto Rico we were raised in a tight budget and when we came here and we saw the abundance. Abundance of food and toys, in a society where they throw everything away. For me that was very sad because of the way we had been raised. I remember that in Puerto Rico a new pair of shoes was a luxury. Here, we had new shoes every two or three months. The schools were so big.

Cecilia was scared.

[M]y mom was scared too. My uncle picked us up. It was winter and it was very cold. And another thing that I recall is that we had brought with us a pet dog that my brother and I had. It was a medium size dog and when my uncle picked us up at the airport the first thing he told us was that we could not keep it and that he wanted to stop at the anti-cruelty and drop off the dog because my aunt had cats. So, here we are my brother and I and my mother are brought into this foreign place named Chicago and our first stop in the city is in the anti-cruelty to drop off our dog "Chalo". It was very devastating; we cried. My brother and I cried so much.

Daisy's parents met in San Juan, though both were originally from the countryside. Like Teresa, Daisy's mother was working when she met her husband. He had just returned from the army and was stationed in a military camp in San Juan. Daisy's father followed an army friend to Chicago, established a business, and sent for his wife and children in 1954 when Daisy was one year old,

my father came first on his own. He moved here because someone from the army who was a friend of his, you know, how when their time is up and they get honorary discharge. His friend came to Chicago and got a nice home in the Humboldt Park area. They were very close friends. My father came to Chicago lived with him and his wife. My mother came and flew into Chicago with my little sisters and moved upstairs. My dad and his friend were electronically inclined. My father was a T.V. repair man. My father and his friend saved enough money to open up a business.

Migrants daughters lived with the uncertainty of returning to

puerto Rico at a moments notice. Haydee remembered how for a while shortly after they arrived they continued to talk about returning home.

[E]verytime something went wrong I heard them say, if things don't work out we'll go back. I was raised with the expectations that we were going to return to Puerto Rico.

These stories confirm married women's account and suggest how children were affected by the migration process as well. puerto Rico with its relative ease of access became a "safety net".

Also through their daughters' recollections, I learned how the family network was also very important to divorced and widowed women with children. Isabel came with her divorced mother in 1954, at the age of eight. She recalled that "my mother like a good Puerto Rican came in search of better opportunities". She learned about these work opportunities from other women in the family who had already moved to Chicago. They convinced her to make the move. Isabel's mother left her children behind with her mother, and worked to save the money to send for them. Isabel's older sister joined her mother in 1955 and Isabel followed in 1957. Milagros' mother was corresponding with relatives in Chicago when she began to think about migrating. Her mother was a widow and they were living on a tight budget. Milagros states that

it was my mom's decision to come to Chicago. You know that Puerto Rican parents never consult their children about decisions like that. I think she decided to come because she wanted to get a better job and she also

wanted a better environment for us.

Milagros' mother had many cousins in Chicago and every once in a while a letter arrived inviting her to join them. Eventually, a visiting family member came to the island for a visit and persuaded Milagros' mother to come and live with them. She, too could not take all her family with her at once. She migrated with her youngest child, leaving the other two girls with her mother. Shortly after Milagros' mother arrived, she married again and within a year she sent for Milagros and her sister. Milagros was nine years old when she came to Chicago. They both re-married within less than a year after coming to Chicago allowing them to form their own households and leave the family network that helped her move.

Rosita is an example of a daughter that was raised in the United States and when confronted with problems of her own she opted for migration. She had followed her widowed mother to New York City, where she went looking for new ways to support the family. Rosita attended school in the city but it became increasingly difficult due to the language barrier and her age. She was moved back several grades and felt self-conscious being the oldest child in her class. She dropped out of school and entered the labor market even before reaching legal working age. Rosita's mother began pressuring her into thinking about marriage, even picking out a likely young man. To escape such family pressures Rosita moved to Chicago. Her brother had already moved after a "compadre" told him of

better job opportunities. Rosita attempted to use migration as a strategy to escape her oppressive family situations. But moving away was not enough because within a year her mother had followed her. She lived in Chicago for a while but eventually moved back to Puerto Rico. Although she did not explicitly state it, the underlying assumption was that her mother continued to make her life impossible.

### Single women

Working class single women, as Laura's case illustrates, found themselves bound to family responsibilities like married women. In fact, like other working class women, at the beginning she resisted the move.

I came against my will. I came because my brother asked me to come and because my family's economic situation was bad. I wanted to go nursing school, but I had to postpone it. Later on, I thought to myself that may be here I could find more opportunities to study nursing.

Laura moved to Chicago in 1959 to care for her brother. He had come to Chicago from Miami- where his contract had expired as a contract worker- because a cousin had helped him find a job. He had fallen ill and needed someone to care for him. Here, as in the case of married women, Laura's migration was a function of her role within the family as a caretaker. She rationalized to herself that opportunities would be better in Chicago. But, "once here, I found myself facing the language barrier, it was very hard to overcome". She started going to English classes and worked during the day. Lupe, also a working class migrant,

left the island hoping to go to nursing school. She had just finished high school and wanted to continue her education. She consulted with her mother and brothers who were working in Chicago and in 1967 made her move to the city. For Lupe, life in the city meant "more opportunities to work and study". But,

when I arrived here I wanted to study but my English skills were a barrier. So, I decided to study English in the evenings and work during the day.

Lupe made an attempt to overcome her problem but that meant that she had to postpone going to nursing school. Not everything went as Lupe planned.

My oldest brother, because as you know, at that time women respected the authority of the men in the house, my older brother did not want me to go to school at night. He said it was too dangerous. So I had to start working.

For Lupe moving meant better educational opportunities but given her brother's protectiveness she could not pursue her goals.

Lourdes' mother came to Chicago partly because her family needed her economic help. But, the move also meant an opportunity to get away from the demands placed on her by her family. In Chicago she moved in with her brother who required that she conform to the cultural roles expected of a single Puerto Rican woman. Lourdes describes what happened to her mother.

In the process she meets my father and ends up getting married. You see my mother wanted to escape the jurisdiction of her brother so one night while they were dating she forced the situation by staying overnight with my father. Of course, my uncle as a good Puerto Rican must rectify her honor, and forced them to get married.

The differences here are clear: whereas Lupe and Lourdes' mother opted for marriage as a way of freeing themselves from their brother's control; Laura saw school as her way out. Laura, had also to put up with her brother protectiveness but he did not prevent her from attending school to learn English. For Lupe, the promise of Chicago was betrayed.

It was very hard. In Puerto Rico we were twelve in the family but my mother gave us everything we wanted. When I get here I find that I have to go to work in a factory for eight hours a day. Somewhere, there is a misunderstanding, people leave our country to come to the United States seeking better opportunities, but what one finds is suffering and hardship.

Laura also had mixed feelings but felt happier.

I thought to myself that if I return to Puerto Rico the situation is going to be worst. I asked myself whether it was worth it, giving up nursing school and staying here. I have learned about a lot of things, people, life, struggle, value of money, the value of meeting people from different nationalities. It was hard but I learned a lot.

As these stories suggest working class women, in different family arrangements, have used migration as a strategy to deal with both economic and personal problems. Working class married women came to Chicago because of the promise of job opportunities for their husbands and to some extent themselves. Chicago did fulfill that promise as I will show in Chapter IV. Working class married women also faced the language barrier. Since the network of friends was limited to other Puerto Ricans the language barrier was not a major problem as long as they did not venture outside the community. But, for working class divorced and single women with

children, the situation was very different as they could not afford to stay home and had to deal with the many barriers.

### Divorced Women

Vicenta is an interesting case because as she stated it she came to Chicago to "assist her daughter during the last months of her pregnancy". But, upon further questioning, I also discovered that Vicenta used her daughter's pregnancy to get away from an alcoholic and abusive husband.

I did not want to leave my husband because I loved him, but he drank a lot and living with him was very hard. ... One night he came home drunk, had a jealous fit and he mistreated me. I told him that I had enough, I was leaving him. ... I did.. When I arrived here I weighted 81 pounds because I suffered a lot with him and because I did not have my children with me. Within a year I weighted 100 pounds.

Vicenta moved in with her son and took care of his children while they work. She also helped her other children who were also living in Chicago at the time.

Leida's case is also rather interesting because the first time she moved from San Juan to Connecticut she had divorced her husband and wanted to get away from him. In Connecticut, she moved in with her brother, got herself a job and eventually remarried. She lived in Connecticut for about 10 years. But, when her marriage began to fall apart in 1972, she divorced again and that is when she moved to Chicago. Obviously, the second time around she used a strategy that proven successful before. She has not remarried since.

Iris' story is slightly different because her move was a



result of her husband abandoning her with her two children. Her case is important because it shows all the maneuvering a divorced woman with children had to go through in the process of moving. As a single woman she had moved from a rural town in the mountain region to San Juan. While working in San Juan, she married and had two children before her husband abandoned her. Left alone with two children, she returned to her hometown where she could depend on her mother's support. Roads and transportation facilities were not well developed in the mountain region. The children had to walk a long distance to the road before a school bus could even pick them up. During the rainy season transportation was next to impossible. This is when Iris began to consider leaving Puerto Rico. Most of her brothers and sisters had already left for the United States.

I talked a lot to my mother. One day, I told my mother, "Mami, I am thinking a lot about my children I want to give them a good education". I think that I want to go to New York with my sister. My sister sent me the ticket. And I left to go to New York. At the beginning, my mother did not want me to take my children with me. She used to tell me that they were going to suffer. I told her that I didn't care if I had to wash toilets but I was taking my children with me.

Iris did not like New York City. She recalled, "everything was so filthy, I did not like it at all. I told myself that I was not going to raise my children there". Two of her brothers were living in Illinois, so she arranged to move with them. She moved in with her brother and his family who at the time had moved to Geneva, Illinois. He helped her find a job, but

when her brother decided to return to Puerto Rico, Iris was left on her own,

my brother tells me that he wants to return to Puerto Rico. I could not believe it. But he told me that he was going to make arrangements to find me a place to live.

He left and I stayed with my two children. My rent was 90.00 a month and I earned like 72.00 weekly. I really had to stretch my money. I had to pay everything rent, utilities, everything.

After her brother left her in Geneva, Illinois, it became increasingly difficult for Iris and her children. Iris remembered "I used to cry a lot. I had to go to work and leave my children alone. I used to call my neighbor so that they would awake them up to go to school. I was the only Puerto Rican in the whole town and I did not know any English." Shortly after her brother left, Iris was laid off from work. Unable to pay the rent and meet her expenses, she was evicted from her apartment. Her other brother came to her rescue and helped her relocate yet again. That is when Iris moved to Chicago. For Iris moving meant seeking a better life for her and her children. But it also meant that since she was alone she had to depend on her family. Moving from New York to Geneva was made possible because of her brother. While in Geneva, once her brother decided to move back to Puerto Rico, it placed her in a financial bind. Living with her brother relieved Iris of some economic responsibilities that in the early stages of settlement she could not afford. Iris unlike other divorced Puerto Rican women did not leave her children behind. Consequently, that complicated the process of settle-

ment considerably. She not only had to support herself but worry about her children's welfare.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described how within the context of a changing political economy, migration as domestic workers was one strategy women used, as Rosita's case suggest, to deal not only with shrinking economic opportunities but also with personal problems. But, Puerto Rican women did not stay in domestic work for long. Factory work offered women better wages and the opportunities to work alongside their husbands.

The migration of the working class families that followed these domestic workers defies easy categorization. They travelled as wives, daughters, sisters, and in the multiple roles a woman can play within the family structure. The political economy that rendered their husbands unemployable forced them to migrate to Chicago as part of a family strategy. The circumstances surrounding their migration were linked to gender relations in the family. Some women went willingly thinking that the move would improve their families' financial situation. Others resisted, but ultimately their roles as mothers and wives compelled them to follow their husbands to Chicago. Not all Puerto Rican women followed their husbands aimlessly. Some resisted. Rita and Luz demanded that their husbands keep the promise to send for them.

Strictly speaking, the married working class women I talked to did not come to Chicago looking for jobs, although eventually many ended up working for wages. They came to Chicago to support their husbands and be with their families.

Using, our current definition of labor migrations, their experiences do not fit the model. But if one expands this definition to include women's reproductive activities, then they are also labor migrants. When women talked about bringing relatives from Puerto Rico to help with child care they show how other women can get involve in the migration process to do the reproductive work which enabled them to support their families economically.

Economic reasons were not the only reason bringing working class women to Chicago. Lupe had educational aspirations of her own when she moved to Chicago. Divorced and women with children moved looking for better opportunities for themselves and sometimes trying to escape from their husbands. Rosita who had been raised in New York City used migration to run away from her mother.

These interviews also show the importance of the family network in mediating the move. In contrast to the domestic workers who used contracted work to make the move, working class respondents used other family members and friends in the migration process.

Has<sup>v</sup> the changes in the political economy affected working class Puerto Ricans exclusively? Is there any evidence that other class groups are (or have been involved) in the migration process? These are the issues I take in the next chapter as I move on to discuss the reasons bringing educated and professional women to Chicago.

NOTES

1. The beginning of the so-called off-shore processing plants is always ascribed to the 1960's when Fairchild opened the first electronic plant in Hong Kong. Rios (1990) argues that Puerto Rico's model of development was already in place a decade earlier than Fairchild's.
- ✓ 2. One of the most common misconceptions about Operation Bootstrap is that it is an undifferentiated model of exported development dominated by U.S. capital (Pantojas, 1990). Actually, Operation Bootstrap has followed three distinctive stages. Following the export processing strategy from 1947-1963's, there was the transnational capital strategy from 1963-1973. Recently, restructuring toward high-finance strategy from 1973-to the present.
- ✓ 3. Internal migration was already a way of life for Puerto Ricans given the economic changes introduced by the new colonial power in 1898. The United States became the new colonial power capital investments transformed Puerto Rico from a dual-crop economy into a sugar export economy. One of the first changes introduced by the new colonial power was to replace the cultivation of coffee and tobacco with sugar which was the most attractive. Sugar mills owned by American companies became the center of the productive process. Puerto Ricans moved from the mountainous inland areas to the coastal cane fields and urban tobacco factories in search of jobs. Between 1899 and 1940 the central-western region of the island-extending from Morovis to Mayaguez, and known as the coffee producing region, experienced a serious population decline, while the coastal cane-growing region and the San Juan-Rio Piedras area experienced the most population growth. In fact, of the fifteen major destinations of internal migration between 1899 and 1940, ten were centers of cane cultivation and sugar production, and three were part of the urban San Juan-Rio Piedras area, which grew by a dramatic 448.9 percent. By 1940, the population of these fifteen areas was six times what it had been in 1888 (History Task Force, 1979: 106). In the 1950's, this process accelerated with the decline of agriculture.
4. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1992) uses this term to describe the migration of married undocumented Mexican immigrant women following their husband's migration.
- ✓ 5. As to whether the contract was read in English or Spanish is unknown. The copy of the contract gathered at the National Archives is in English. Apparently, the Department of Labor was not very strict in checking the workers credentials such

as age, schooling, and English proficiency because in available correspondence between government officials this was later reported as a problem.

6. For instance, the Women's Bureau in Washington and its representative in Chicago facilitated information about working conditions and work related problems.

7. This finding is going to be of considerable importance given that among the women interviewed for this study a considerable number of them came to Chicago directly from Ponce.

✓ 8. I gathered that there were two contracts: one in which the potential employer requested the worker and one which the employee signed. A copy of both contracts is available in Appendix A. The contract signed by the women was designed by the Department of Labor of the government of Puerto Rico. The contract provided for the signatures of the representative of the employment agency, the employer, employee, and was approved by the Commissioner of Labor in Puerto Rico.

9. As to whether there were some taxes taken out of their salaries is unknown.

10. In a letter written by Daisy Reck, Special Assistant to the Governor to Russell C. Derrickson, Division of Territories and Island Possessions there is some evidence to suggest that while Elena Padilla was doing her research in Chicago she interfered on behalf of some of the contract workers. Apparently the Palmer House Management which at that time had hired some Puerto Rican workers told them that they cannot claim their families as dependents if they were living in Puerto Rico.

11. The names of the employer and employee have been changed to protect their anonymity.

12. The members of the committee were the intellectual cadre that orchestrated the early stages of the industrialization plan. They met regularly and discussed many proposals, however, absurd, about the possibilities of emigration. They recommended the creation of the Office of Migration to monitor job opportunities in the States and to help distribute Puerto Ricans to other places other than New York City.

✓ 13. See "Suggestions for an Experiment in Placement of Household Workers". Record Group, 126, Division of Territories and Island Possessions, National Archives, Washington, D.C. The report opened with a description of domestic service as one job which offered unlimited opportunities and where the ✓

employment conditions were the most favorable because "half a million women left this field during the war". Such a program would at the same time offer Puerto Rican women opportunities for work, travel, and education. The report recommended further research to determine whether young Puerto Rican women might be interested in domestic service in the U.S., the extent of demand in the U.S., and the need for a specialized training program. It suggested the recruitment of 200 young women to be divided in groups of fifty to be placed in four different cities. One section quotes Donald O'Connor, economist for the Office of Puerto Rico in Washington, and his recommendations as to what a potential worker should be prepared to do. These included: (1) use and recognition of elementary English to follow directions and make purchases; (2) use of words for household appliances (i.e., toasters, washing machine sink, faucet), common food names, common names for detergents and cleansers; (3) be able to clean and cook "mainland style"; (4) "to be able to use community organizations for getting acquainted, getting along, and getting ahead, and getting married".

14. Serving in the U.S. military was one of the responsibilities United States citizenship imposed on Puerto Ricans. ✓ Puerto Ricans served in World War I, II, Korean War, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf War. In particular, World War II and the Korean War were instrumental in bringing Puerto Ricans face to face with American culture. The establishment of direct flights from San Juan to Chicago also facilitated and accelerated the movement.

15. I talked to a man who had moved to Chicago in the 1950 and he admitted that one of the reasons he did not want to bring his wife was because he had a lover (or what Puerto Rican men call "a querida"). In fact, his lover had helped him a job when he was laid off from work. Eventually pressured by his wife, he send her a ticket.

16. Delia's interview was conducted in Spanish and in spanish she meant to say the "balcon" which is porch in English. I was particularly interested in the new language she had created.



## CHAPTER III

### REASONS BRINGING EDUCATED WOMEN TO CHICAGO

#### Introduction

In the 1960's, the climate that the Popular Democratic Party (PPD) government had worked so hard to create (i.e., cheap labor, low level unionization, tax exemptions and easy access to U.S. markets) was threatened. Trade unions in the United States argued to Congress that low wages in Puerto Rico encouraged "runaway shops" leading to unemployment and the weakening of their bargaining power. Since Puerto Rico is under federal jurisdiction, Congress used minimum wage legislation as a means to limit Puerto Rico's competitive advantage.<sup>1</sup> The relationship between labor and capital was a problem industrialist<sup>3</sup> faced as "competition among U.S. trade unions for membership in Puerto Rico had brought about a proliferation of gang-style violence in union elections and bargaining process" (Pantojas, 1990:103). Industrialist<sup>5</sup> also worried that as the tax exemption period for companies came to an end it would lead to the flight of capital.<sup>2</sup>

As a result, a new course for the development program was introduced in the Incentive Act of 1963 (Law 57 of June 13, 1963). This law established a new industrial incentive by extending tax exemptions periods of ten, twelve, and seventeen

years to new industries.<sup>3</sup> The industries government industrialist now aimed to attract were petrochemicals. A special oil and naphtha import quotas was put in place in order to stimulate economic development on the island.<sup>4</sup> This marked the massive entrance of transnational capital into Puerto Rico and increased the dependence of the colony <sup>on</sup> ~~to~~ the metropolis.

Between 1963 and 1976, the island became an intermediate point in the production process of transnational corporations (TNC) in capital-intensive manufacturing such as petroleum refining, petrochemicals, scientific instruments, and electrical equipment. Puerto Rico became a profit paradise for TNCs, but, the profit was not reinvested in the island. Instead, the profit went to banks and investments companies in the United States. This led to widespread unemployment and underemployment. The situation became worse<sup>e</sup> when in 1973 President Richard Nixon terminated the special import quota by adding a license fee. With the 1973 oil embargo, Puerto Rico plunged into a severe economic crisis (Pantojas, 1990).

From 1963 to 1976, unemployment grew from 12.8 percent to 19.4 percent. The rate of participation of the adult population in the labor force dropped from 44.2 to 41.6 percent.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the composition of the labor force changed along gender lines. Work in the informal sector became so popular that Puerto Ricans coined a name for it: "chiripeo". The public sector expanded to provide services to the displaced workers thus altering women's employment patterns. Acevedo

(1990) found that from 1960 to 1970 female employment grew in the categories of clerical and kindred workers, professionals, service, and sales workers. The federal government played a major role here by providing money for welfare payments, food stamps, rent subsidies in the forms of transfer payments.<sup>6</sup> In the 1960's, social and welfare workers became the third most important female occupation (Acevedo, 1990). The interviews with educated women show that when federal funds were cut they were among the most affected. Professional and educated women when faced with unemployment and fewer opportunities on the island opted to leave and move to Chicago.

In the late 1970's it was clear that Puerto Rico had lost its competitive advantage as a producer of intermediate goods for the U.S. market as wages were above international competition.<sup>7</sup> Pantojas (1990:144) argues that what happened in Puerto Rico in the 1970's was part of a larger international crisis of accumulation through productive investment. In an internationally interconnected system, crises of this sort serve an important function by cleaning the system, displacing inefficient producers and allowing the more efficient one<sup>s</sup> to thrive. Puerto Rico needed to adapt and legitimize its position in the international circuit of production within the orbit of U.S. capital.<sup>8</sup> Once again, the goal was to transform Puerto Rico into a service-led economy where U.S. transnational capital in service and finance would become the leading economic force.<sup>9</sup>

In the 1980's, Puerto Rico moved its emphasis from TNC's

to the service and financial sectors and the timing was perfect. Globally, financial activities and speculation emerged as the new axis of accumulation (Pantojas, 1990).<sup>10</sup> The island now entered a stage of peripheral postindustrialization. Puerto Rico, along with Ireland, and other post-industrial economies serve as halfway houses between high cost, highly regulated advanced capitalist countries and very low-cost but infrastructurally inadequate peripheral countries (Pantojas, 1990). Machinery, capital, and basic components used in industries are imported and decision-making, technologies, research and development are anchored in the core countries. As Puerto Rico entered the post-industrial era in the global economy, socioeconomic divisions between Puerto Ricans deepened and the employment situation became more precarious.

In sum, the economic changes introduced by this new industrial policy required a highly educated work force. The jobs created were in the white collar sectors of the economy such as banks, commerce, and government. Thus, explaining why increasingly a new category of migrants between Puerto Rico and the United States were students seeking better educational opportunities.<sup>11</sup> These changes can also explain other developments in the migration patterns to and from Puerto Rico. Recently, foreigners, in particular Cubans, Dominicans, and Jamaicans have begun to migrate to Puerto Rico in greater numbers.<sup>12</sup> In addition, out-migration has reached record

highs. Between 1977 and 1988, out-migration of Puerto Ricans to the United States averaged 25,600 persons a year, the highest since the first stage of Operation Bootstrap (Baerga and Thompson, 1990).

My interviews with educated migrants help to document the more personal side of these changes in Puerto Rico's political economy. Respondents accounts suggest that in the 1960's educated Puerto Ricans and their families joined working class and poor Puerto Ricans in the migration process to Chicago. One of the first manifestations of this movement is the teacher recruitment that brought Amanda to Chicago. Unlike the 1940's when the recruitment served the needs of American employers, this program was initiated by the demands of the Puerto Rican community, as parents lobbied for a more sensitive educational system responsive to Puerto Rican children. But, for Amanda, the teacher recruitment meant also professional opportunities and better wages when compared to Puerto Rico.

In contrast to the working class respondents, the most typical migrant within this group is a single, highly educated, childless woman. Like their working class counterparts, single educated migrants used migration as a strategy to deal with both economic and personal problems. They also relied on the family network to make the move. For example, while Julia left the island with the help of her brother, Magdalena came with the help of her sister. Both Julia and Magdalena had lost

their government jobs when they began to contemplate migration. Julia came with the goal of continuing her education. Magdalena was not at all clear why she came, although I suspect she did so to explore the possibilities of a job. Sandra and Yolanda both went to college in Puerto Rico, before coming to Chicago on a "vacation". However, they both ended up staying with profound consequences to their lives. Ines, also college educated and single, came to Chicago from Kansas after finishing her bachelors degree requirements because she wanted to work with a political group in the community.

Lisa is an example of a second-generation New York City raised woman who had moved back to the Island to go to the University of Puerto Rico. While attending school, she got involved with a man and became pregnant. Unable to face her parents she moved back to New York City on her own and when some friends in Chicago offered to help she jumped at the opportunity. Like Lisa, Angelica had lived in Chicago with her sister and returned to the Island to go to the University of Puerto Rico. Upon receiving her undergraduate degree she decided to stay and worked as a teacher. She was engaged to be married but when the relationship ended she ran away to Chicago.

Married educated women were less dependent on relatives, as they had resources of their own to make the move. As Brunilda's case suggest, some educated women moved not because job opportunities seemed better, she had been offered a job.

Here, the roles became reversed with her husband following her to Chicago. At some point, the roles reversed again but the conditions were different. Married educated women were less encumbered by gender relations of authority. They shared in the decision making and had an agenda of their own to pursue. Although Vilma was not legally married when she came to Chicago with her boyfriend, I have included her story within this group because she talked about it as if she and her boyfriend were a family unit. Some, like Rosa, moved to Chicago in a rigidly gendered way as she followed her educated husband to Chicago. But, in contrast to the experiences of working class women, moving was a joint family project. Rosa talked about moving as an adventure. Aurea too came with her husband to Chicago and the language she used to describe the move was different. Aurea talked about moving as a mutual agreement between her and her husband.

Finally, educated divorced women with children also needed the family network just as their working class counterparts. They too moved the family in stages. But, they were less dependent on family members since they had resources of their own. Educated divorced women, like Marisa and Myrna, had an edge over working class women since educational levels translated easier into better job opportunities.

### The Teacher Recruitment

In the 1960's, the formal recruitment of migrants was

reinstated this time to meet the needs of the Puerto Rican community. Amanda was one of the seven teachers that came to Chicago as part of the teacher recruitment.

In the 1960's, migration and internal population growth lead to a pattern of ethnic concentration toward the near northwest side of the city (Ropka, 1980; Padilla, 1987). The Westtown/Humboldt Park communities were the general area where Puerto Ricans began to concentrate. By 1960, the Division Street area housed nearly one fourth of the city's Puerto Rican population. In fact, Division Street still is considered the heart of the community. As these communities became overwhelmingly Puerto Rican and as the ill prepared school system began to receive the children of Puerto Rican migrants a number of problems arose. The dropout rate was one of the main indicators of such failure. Figures from the Board of Education indicate that there were 574,495 children enrolled in Chicago's elementary schools, out of which 10.4 percent spoke Spanish as their first language (Padilla, 1987). A good number of Puerto Rican children attended Von Humboldt School located in the heart of the Division Street Area. When looking at the ratio of teacher per pupil, there were only 202 Spanish-speaking teachers for 59,778 children. El Puertoriqueno, a local Spanish newspaper, ran a number of editorials denouncing the city's public education system, demanding that since education had been the route through which other disadvantaged groups had achieved social mobility, Puerto Rican students



should be provided with the same opportunity (Padilla, 1987:2-10). Aurea remembered the early stages of the problem

the situation was very difficult. A number of Puerto Rican parents were arrested for protesting the school conditions. There was no fair representation in the parents council since Puerto Rican parents could not communicate because of language barriers. Sometimes they were not allowed to enter the school with the children. Teachers and school administrators were not very sensitive to our needs.

Consequently, parents and community leaders began to organize demonstrations and demand changes in the school system. One of the resolutions of the school crisis was to establish a program to help teachers improve their understanding of Puerto Rican culture through a cultural exchange. Amanda, currently a school principal in one of the "barrio" schools, was part of the so-called exchange. The program was not initially designed to recruit teachers, it was supposed to be an exchange. Some teachers from Puerto Rico would come to the U.S. (Chicago, New York City) teach for a year and some American teachers would go to Puerto Rico to study Spanish and Puerto Rican culture. However, the program ended in a recruitment because there were more teachers coming to the states than those going to Puerto Rico. The program lasted for about three to four years.

In the initial group that came to Chicago there were nine teachers: seven women and two men. Amanda had been working as a teacher in San Juan when she heard of the recruitment of teachers. She originally requested to go to New York City because she was more familiar with that city, having studied

there for a couple of summers. However, she was advised that since everyone wanted to go to New York City she should select Chicago to increase her chances. After their arrival, Amanda said that she learned that there had been a number of community demonstrations in which parents were outraged at the problems of Puerto Rican children in Chicago schools especially in the west side. According to Amanda,

I cannot tell you that I came because of the money, because to some extent, I did not come here to stay, I came because I was curious. But, I stayed because of the money, because I realized I was earning so little. Look, I remember that when I got my check, I cannot tell how much I earned, I had three loans I had taken to pay for my masters and they took the payments from my check. Every two weeks I had \$118.00. I was living in Guaynabo and I was paying \$110.00 for rent. After paying the rent I had \$8.00 left. With my other check I bought food. You can imagine how I lived. I came because I was curious. It never crossed my mind to not go back but when I came and realized all the money I had, imagine.

You see they were paying us an adjusted salary. The Government of Puerto Rico continued paying our salaries but it was adjusted to the standard of living here. Imagine all that money.

Within two years they told us that we had to return to Puerto Rico or resign from our positions.

Imagine, I was not going to return. So that, I came because I was curious but I stayed because of economic reasons.

Overall, they were welcome by the Puerto Rican community. But, since it was the first time that professionals had come from the island they were treated differently. There was considerable resentment. She felt that "they promoted us very quickly which a lot of people resented it". This raises a number of interesting questions. Was her presence resented because she

was an educated upwardly mobile professional or because she was a woman? Amanda believed that it had to do with their professional status. Suddenly they had a lot of influence over the community. She also alluded to what she called a tension between Puerto Ricans born in the United States and those born on the island.

According to Amanda, all of these teachers married outside their group as well. Of all the women that came, only one returned home because, according to Amanda, "she was older and she had family responsibilities in Puerto Rico". The rest were young, single, and decided to stay. When comparing this recruitment to the domestic workers the similarities are striking. Both groups of recruits were single and young. They were recruited because of labor shortages in Chicago. Like, the domestic workers, Amanda and the other teachers very quickly found that salaries and opportunities for promotion were far better in Chicago than back home.

### Single Women

The experiences of Julia and Magdalena, when compared to their working class counterparts, illustrate how class background can make a difference in the migration process and in the options available to women who migrate. They both had college degrees and had worked with the government.

Julia had just finished her undergraduate degree from University of Puerto Rico in San Juan. She had been thinking

about continuing to work on a degree in social work, when she was offered a teaching position in her hometown of Lares. She did not like it and instead applied for a part-time job with the Puerto Rican Housing Authority. The Puerto Rican Housing Authority, part of the federal government and funded with federal funds, was constructing a low income (caserio) housing complex and needed people to interview potential residents. She knew it was a part time position, and she started thinking of going back to school, this time in the United States

I called my brother who was doing his internship for medical school in Minneapolis. And he said if you want to come, that's fine. He suggested I should come and stay with him. He also suggested to talk to my sister who was also living in Illinois to get a different opinion. (Where?) In Bloomington. So, that's what I did, I went to Minneapolis and I registered in the university.

She was registered to go to school when she and her brother went to visit her sister in Bloomington.

one day we came to visit my sister in Bloomington and my brother says let's go to the Office of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in Chicago just to check things out. I had been looking for a job in Minneapolis but I had no luck. Some people told me you need more experience, others told me you need more schooling. At the office of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico they told me that they were looking for bilingual social workers in Milwaukee. They even called for me and made an appointment for an interview the following day. We stayed in Chicago that night and left to Milwaukee the following morning. They interviewed me and shortly after we arrived in Minneapolis they told me I got the job.

Julia's plans changed with the prospect of a job. She left her brother in Minneapolis and moved to Milwaukee. Before she moved, her brother went with her to help her find an apartment. She found an apartment close to her work and lived there

for the two years she stayed in Milwaukee. She would have liked to remain in Milwaukee longer but positions were frozen and since there were no opportunities for mobility she started considering moving again. By that time, her brother had moved to Chicago as well. She asked him to pick up an application for a job with the Public Aid Office. She sent the application, was interviewed, and offered the job. Once again, her brother helped her to find an apartment in Chicago. Shortly after she established herself in Chicago she brought over her mother. Obviously, Julia's educational and class background afforded her a range of options different from those available to working class women. Her brother was always there to help her but did not impose upon her any kind of over-protectiveness with which others like Lupe had to endure.

Madgalena had graduated with her bachelors degree and was working at the University of Puerto Rico. In answering why she came to Chicago she says

honestly, I'm not very clear as to why I came to Chicago. There were many reasons. I migrated with a friend whose ambition had always been to come to the U.S. In fact, I never, ever, had even considered coming here and settle. In fact, I had internalized many of the prejudices that exist in Puerto Rico concerning the division that exists between Puerto Ricans in the U.S. and Puerto Ricans in the island. But, around that time I was working for the university in a special project that was funded with federal funds. Nixon cut the funds and there I was unemployed. So, I decided to come here. First, I thought of it as an adventure. It never crossed my mind to stay permanently. But I found a job immediately so I though I would stay for a while.

Actually, Magdalena, like Julia, had been unemployed. She talked about how a number of people in her close circle of

friends and family (her sister) who were already living and working in Chicago. She arrived in September and by October she had landed a job.

Sandra and Diana suggest the relative ease with which single childless women can change their minds and become migrants. While in Puerto Rico, Sandra had been going to college to get a degree in psychology. She was from a big family and was one of the few who had managed to go college. She had not completed her undergraduate degree when she came to Chicago to spend a summer with her sister in 1980. While in Chicago her sister persuaded her to stay and explore the idea of finishing school in the United States. She said "my sister suggested that I could stay in Chicago that perhaps I could continue my studies and find a better job". With relative ease what had started as a "vacation" became a more permanent commitment. She went to a local community college and then transferred to Northeastern University and that is when she met the father of her three year old baby. They started dating and eventually married. She stopped going to school to become a full time housewife. Within less than a year since they had married she got pregnant and the marriage began to fall apart. By the time she had the baby they had divorced. Unable to work and support herself and the baby, she started taking public aid. She had met another fellow and was living with him at the time of the interview. She had also found a job in a factory where her sister was a supervisor. I asked her if she had any

regrets after moving to Chicago to which she replied: "I like Chicago because there are more opportunities in Chicago when compared to Puerto Rico, I plan to continue working and move on to a better job when I am ready". What began as a fairly easy and exciting move became a life changing event.

Yolanda, like Sandra, came to spend a vacation with her sister in Chicago in 1983. She had just completed her bachelors degree and she was not very clear as to where she was going next.

My sister asked what I was going to do when I return home? I told that I could start my masters degree or I could get a job but that I really did not know?

One day her sister showed her an article from the Chicago Tribune which discussed the availability of scholarships for minority students. Yolanda jumped at the opportunity. She started to study for a master's degree and was close to finishing when she felt overwhelmed with all the work. She decided that she needed a break. She quit going to school and found a job with a local insurance company. At work, she met a young man from the Dominican Republic who had been raised in New York City and they started dating. Within a couple of years they were married. For these two women, what began as a vacation became a life changing event.

With the growth of the Puerto Rican community came the growth of self-help organizations which helped in the migration process. Religious, political, and cultural groups proliferated in the community making it nearly impossible to

speaking about a single Puerto Rican community. Instead, there are communities within the community. Ines came to Chicago because she wanted to work with a specific political group. She had learned about this group while going to school in Kansas. As she was finishing college she got involved with a political group, the majority of whom were Americans concerned with the political situation in Latin America. Through her involvement with this group she learned about a group in Chicago that supported the independence of Puerto Rico. She formed a chapter of the group in Kansas and later chose Chicago for her internship in musical therapy in order to work more closely with the group. For Ines, this political group provided the network of support and the necessary information to work and live in the city that the family provided for other migrants.

Lisa was born in New York City. As a child, she had shuttled between Puerto Rico and New York City as her parents settled and resettled in the island. Nearing the end of high school, Lisa was sent back to Puerto Rico to spend the summer with her relatives as done so often in previous years. At the insistence of her aunts, Lisa started school again and eventually enrolled at the University of Puerto Rico. According to Lisa, attending the University of Puerto Rico in the 1960's was a very important event in her life. While there she got involved with the Student Independence Movement which brought a lot of confrontations with her family. At that time



she started dating a student who was also attending the University and she got pregnant. Her boyfriend wanted her to have an abortion but since she was very religious she did not agree. Instead she opted to leave the island for New York City, a place which she knew very well. She lived in the YWCA and was running out of money when she got a part-time job as a receptionist. But, things were not working out very well for her when she got a phone call from some church friends in Chicago. They offered to help her and within less than a year of coming to New York City, she left for Chicago.

Like Lisa, Angelica had migrated to Chicago to be company for her sister who had just married. She was fourteen years old when she moved to Chicago. She finished high school in Chicago and returned to the Island to go to the University of Puerto Rico. In Puerto Rico, after finishing her bachelors degree, she returned to her hometown to work as a teacher. At that time she got involved with the son of a minister in town and the pressures for her to conform to the rules and traditions of small town life were many.

[She stopped for a moment took a deep breath and continued] I had so many problems. Juncos was a small town and my I had big city attitudes and ideas... knowing that his parents were not going to accept me I left for Chicago running away from the situation.

Angelica returned to Chicago in 1961 to live with her sister. Her case illustrates the various contexts in which Puerto Rican women may find themselves in the migration process. The problems she encountered as an educated migrant will be

discussed in Chapter VI.

### Married Women

For the educated married women moving was a joint family project. However, the language women used to describe the move differs from that of the working class married women. They came with their husbands, but they had an agenda of their own. Aurea met her husband<sup>13</sup> while attending the University of Puerto Rico. Initially, the couple moved from San Juan to Boston to enable her husband to take a university position there. In 1971, a new job opportunity brought them to Chicago. Aurea talked about moving as a mutual arrangement between she and her husband. She saw the move to Chicago as an opportunity to join community and political struggles. In fact, shortly after arriving in the city they bought a house, something which took years for working class families to accomplish.

Brunilda had just completed her bachelors degree and was working as a field researcher for the University of Puerto Rico when she was asked to work with a group of American scholars who came to Puerto Rico to conduct research in the 1970's. The researchers were very pleased with her work and offered to extend her a position. To do that she had to relocate to Chicago. They promised they would help her to make the transition. She had just been married when the job offer came and, she felt,

that was a big problem. My husband did not want to come, he said that he did not know English. He just did not

want to come. I told him that there were no doubts in mind as to what that job meant for me. It was a great opportunity and I was not going to let it go. If he did not want to come then I guess that was it, I knew I was coming with him or without him

In this case the roles changed. It was the husband who was asked to follow his wife and initially he resisted. The job meant so much to Brunilda that she was willing to sacrifice her marriage. Brunilda, therefore, moved within a professional rather than a family network. In addition, she did not live close to other Puerto Ricans in Chicago because the research team found her a place to stay closer to the university. While at the university,

I met a student who was doing his doctorate in sociology and was married to a Puerto Rican. He was an American but he spoke very good Spanish. We became very good friends. His wife told me about scholarship opportunities to continue studying. So I decided to start my masters.

After completing her work with the university researchers, Brunilda started graduate studies at a local university. She went to school full time for a year and in 1971 started working as a community organizer in the South Side. In 1972,

My husband never had plans to stay here and he wanted to return [to Puerto Rico] for a while. He is very close to his family. So, we went back home as an adventure. I was expecting my second baby. It was his decision this time. He did not like the weather. I liked Chicago but I did not mind the move.

From 1972 to 1976 they remained in Puerto Rico. They lived and worked in Hato Rey, part of the San Juan metropolitan area. In 1976, a friend offered her husband a job in Chicago but this time she said she did not want to come. She had been teaching

at a local university, had started her doctorate, and liked what she was doing. She said she returned to Chicago because her husband promised her she could go back to school on a full time basis and finished her doctorate. So even though she may have followed him Brunilda had an agenda of her own in Chicago.

Vilma had moved from San Juan to Wisconsin to go graduate school. While in Madison, she met future husband and they moved in together. They had completed their degrees when he was offered a job in Chicago. She was in the job market herself. In 1986, they both relocated to Chicago. Vilma describe her move too as traditional, though she had reasons of her own to make the move as well.

Specifically, the reason I came to Chicago is very traditional in terms that I had just finished my masters and was looking for a job when my "companero" got a job offer in Chicago. But I came not only for him but also knowing that in Madison there was no professional future for me.

Even now, as Puerto Rican women enter into new living arrangements with their partners, they still find themselves following men. But, as Vilma's and Brunilda's case suggest women had agendas of their own.

### Divorced Women With Children

Marisa had a good job with the Puerto Rican government prior to moving to Chicago. She had just finished her bachelors degree and was expecting a promotion when she began to realize that,

after I had sacrificed so much in completing my education, the chances for getting the promotion were very slim.... So, I started thinking about coming to Chicago to continue my education.

In 1984 she made the move. She was already familiar with Chicago because she had spent a vacation with her sister and her husband in the city. Like many divorced working class women, Marisa had to leave her son behind in Puerto Rico with her father. She moved in with her aunt (her father's sister) and decided to work before trying graduate school. Her cousin worked in a hotel and helped her find a job. Within six months she had her own apartment and sent for her son. But,

I had to postpone going to school for a while because I had my son with me and I needed to think about his schooling. When he finished high school. In 1988, my son graduated from high school and the same year I started my masters.

She worked and went to school on a part-time basis until she completed her Masters degree. The same year her son went on to college she also remarried. Again, her family was instrumental in helping her move and make the transition but her middle class resources allowed her better job opportunities and possibilities for advancement.

Myrna's brother had moved to Chicago in the 1970's and opened a bookstore, the only bookstore in the community. Myrna had been to Chicago several times to visit him and was thoroughly familiar with issues and needs within the Puerto Rican community. Using some of her experience from previous businesses she had established while in Puerto Rico, in 1983, Myrna came to Chicago because she not only

liked the city very much [but also] saw a number of [economic] opportunities. Even though I had the same opportunities in Puerto Rico I thought that in Chicago it would be more beneficial to me. I knew that I had a lot of things to contribute to the community. When I came here on November 11, 1983, I knew I was going to stay.

These two cases illustrate how educated divorced women with children, like their working class counterparts, still needed the family network to help them move. They were more resourceful because they had knowledge about the city. They had definite ideas and plans for their lives and the human capital to accomplish it.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described how in the context of a changing political economy migration has become a strategy for Puerto Ricans across class backgrounds. I have shown how as Puerto Rico's role in the global economy changed, the relationship between the colony and metropolis deepened, thus, creating the structural conditions that would lead to more movement between Puerto Rico and mainland communities.

The accounts I have presented here suggested the variety of circumstances and routes that educated and professional women migrants took to come to Chicago. For working class families the two most likely places of departure were: the Island and New York City. The routes they took were fairly simple as well: from Puerto Rico to Chicago; or from Puerto Rico to New York City then to Chicago. For educated migrants the points of departure were varied. Here, it is evident the emerging complexity in the migration process of Puerto Ricans. Some educated women reached Chicago after residence in other parts of the United States (i.e., Kansas City, Madison, Milwaukee). As Lisa and Angelica's case suggest, mainland raised Puerto Ricans reached Chicago after living and attending the University of Puerto Rico. In fact, the view that emerges from Chapters II and III is one of a "traffic" migration in which Puerto Ricans find themselves moving back-and-forth between mainland communities and the island. This was (and is still) easier because of the colonial relationship

of the Island to the United States. Passports and visas are not necessary, nor is the laborious and arduous naturalization process. This ease of movement allows Puerto Ricans, unlike other immigrants, to come and go more freely.

The reasons bringing educated and professional women to Chicago were varied and complex. For educated women, economic, political, and personal motivations pushed the move. Just as we saw in the 1950's, labor shortages in Chicago continue to pull Puerto Rican women to Chicago. Unlike the 1950's labor recruitment, this time it would be teachers that were brought to fill the needs of the Puerto Rican community.

Comparing the experiences of single working class and single educated women offers the most marked way in which gender and class affect migration. Both Lupe and Julia, came for the same reason-to go to school-and, they were both helped by a brother who had moved earlier. But the outcomes were dramatically different. Lupe faced a language barrier that prevented her from going to nursing school, she was determined to overcome it, but her brother over-protectiveness prevented her from pursuing her goal. Julia, too followed her brother to Minneapolis hoping to go to graduate school, but with the prospect of a job, she went to Milwaukee instead. Her brother helped her all along, assuming the paternal role, but not in constricting ways as in Lupe's case. He helped her find an apartment in a safe place and helped her move, but did not intervene. Sandra and Diana started as vacationers and became



economic migrants looking for better educational opportunities.

Educated married women were more clear in terms of the reasons why they came and less encumbered by gender relations of authority as some like Aurea and Vilma shared in the decision making. They were also less dependent on relatives to help them make the move. As in Brunilda's case, it was a network of professionals that facilitated the move. In fact, Brunilda's case is an interesting example of other ways gender relations affected the migration of men. This middle class woman was willing to leave her husband if he did not want to follow her to Chicago. Later on, the roles reversed as it was her turn to follow him, but even then she knew what she wanted to do in Chicago.

As Marisa's case suggest, educated divorced women with children were dependent on the family network to make the move. Like her working class counterpart, Marisa had to make the move in stages. But women like Marisa and Myrna, had an edge over working class women since educational levels translated easier into job opportunities.

Next, I move on to discuss the problems and strategies Puerto Ricans women and their families faced in the process of settling in Chicago.

## NOTES

1. Between 1950 and 1960, while the average wage in Puerto Rico increased from 42 to 94 cents, in the United States it increased from \$1.50 to \$2.30. There were new minimum wage standards imposed to Puerto Rico but it still maintained a wage differential.
2. One of the ways the colonial government tried to prevent this was by trying to change the terms of the colonial relationship. They proposed ~~the~~ that: (1) Puerto Rico be exempt from some federal laws; (2) be allowed to enter into commercial treaties of its own, subject by the approval of the president; (3) receive more autonomy on judicial and tax matters (Pantojas, 1990). It did not work.
3. This aspect of the law aimed at offsetting the negative impact of the increases in minimum wages and attracted new industries that were less sensitive to wage changes (i.e., capital-intensive industries).
4. Among the companies receiving such special quota were: Commonwealth Oil Refining Corporation (CORCO), the Caribbean Refining Corporation (subsidiary of Union Carbide), and the Phillips Petroleum and Sun Oil Corporation.
5. From 1960 to 1970, women's unemployment rates rose from 6.4 to 7.1, while men's unemployment figure rose from 5.6 to 5.0. ? (Presser and Kishor, 1991). From 1970 to 1980, unemployment rates doubled for women and quadrupled for men (16.5 and 14.5 respectively).
6. From 1960 to 1976, transfer payments increased from \$78.1 million to \$1,619.5 million dollars.
7. In 1970, the average hourly wage had increased to \$1.78 compared to \$3.37 in the United States. In Mexico's export processing zones, the average wage was 66 cents. In other parts of the Caribbean was 23 cents. In Asia, it was 30 cents.
8. This task fell on the hands of the Partido Nuevo Progresista (PNP) as in 1976 they displaced the PPD from power. In 1976, under the leadership of Carlos Romero Barcelo, they won the elections. The challenge was to show that statehood was not incompatible capital accumulation for U.S. transnationals.
9. The legal framework of this economic policy rested in the Industrial Incentive Act of 1978 (Law 26). For example, one aspect of Law 26 gave tax-exemption to export-service industries. In other words, services produced for external markets

would enjoy a fifty percent tax exemption on income, property, excise, municipal taxes, and license fees.

10. Strictly speaking, Puerto Rico is not a foreign tax haven because of most federal financial regulations and corporate laws apply in the island. Although companies use Puerto Rico for their federal tax exemptions, the high finance strategy added a new twist. Companies would have to keep their money in Puerto Rico in order to boost their tax-free global profits. According to Pantojas (1990), as early as 1977 the following U.S. transnational corporations declared have derived over one-fifth of their global income in Puerto Rico: Pepsi Co. announced 21 percent; Union Carbide, 25 percent; Digital Equipment, 57 percent; Motorola, 23 percent; Abbot Laboratories, 71 percent, among others.

11. According to Baerga and Thompson (1990:665) between 1983-1984, seventeen percent of migrants leaving the island were students.

12. Between 1970-1979, 395,500 foreigners arrived on the island.

13. Aurea's husband is not Puerto Rican. He is an American.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FAMILY AND WORK EXPERIENCES OF WORKING CLASS WOMEN

#### Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the family and work experiences of Puerto Rican working class women and their families after arrival in Chicago. Here, I pay particular attention to the strategies working class families developed in the process of settling in the city. As I mentioned in Chapter I, it is useful to distinguish between: strategies of resistance and those of coping or accommodation. Strategies of resistance refer to tactics and actions Puerto Ricans used as a group, or as individuals, to deal with a racially and socially stratified society. Puerto Ricans confronted a great deal of racial prejudice and discrimination in securing a place to live. As families, Puerto Ricans looked for apartments with more than one unit available, or pooled family resources to buy a building. But the most common strategy families use to deal with the housing problem was living with the same family members who facilitated the move. Although these arrangements were temporary, for the most part women talked about the difficulties living with other relatives. Since families lived in small cramped apartments, access to cooking and bathroom facilities were a source of conflict between women. Informal

reciprocity norms dictated that the newly arrived wife would help with the house chores. In Chicago, Puerto Rican women recognized the exploitative nature of these arrangements and fought to change them by standing up to their husbands. In this context, standing up to their husbands becomes a strategy of resistance on the women's part as they contend with their subordination to their husbands. For the first generation migrant women, the home was the woman's domain and the center around which the female world revolved thus having their own place was very important.

Strategies of coping and accommodation refer to actions and tactics used in the allocation of productive and reproductive labor (Lamphere, 1987). Women's work outside the home became a family strategy for surviving and improving their economic position. In the second part of this chapter, I discuss the coping strategies married working class women used in different family arrangements to juggled family and work. Balancing family and work is not a problem unique to immigrant women. What is unique is the possibility of bringing into question the traditional ideologies about the proper role of women. The question then becomes, to what extent the strategies families developed in the process of adapting to life in the city challenged the traditional division of labor within the household?

My interviews suggest that husbands may have accommodated to their wives temporary employment but that did not change

the traditional division of labor within the household. Instead, women developed strategies to accommodate their roles as working wives. Child care called for bringing relatives from Puerto Rico or involving daughters in the basics of housework. Most married working class women viewed factory work as something temporary. Given traditional gender roles in Puerto Rican culture, working class married women remained in the home to clean, cook and take care of the children. But, these home-centered women still found ways of contributing to their families. Even those, like Asuncion and Daniela, who remained in the work force, faced this double burden. For divorced women with children, the lack of child care added to the frustration and pain of settlement.

The struggle to adapt to life in the city was complicated when husbands became irresponsible and abandoned their wives. Four women reported problems with their husbands. But, the strategies women used to deal with such problems varied a great deal. Older women, like Rita, endured their husband's alcoholism and unfaithfulness as long as they were not physically abusive. As Rita's husband became less and less involved with the family affairs, Rita took aggressive action and began to secure ways of providing for the family by renting rooms and investing in real estate. Others like Nellie, Agnes, and Victoria divorced their husbands with profound consequences for the lives as they became single headed households and were forced to rely on welfare.

In Chicago, Puerto Rican women had to take the additional responsibility of transmitting and maintaining Puerto Rican culture, values and traditions. As cultural agents, women relied on community organizations to help with this role. The church, although not very responsive to Puerto Rican needs, provided a place to inculcate young children, especially young women, the values of virginity and sexual abstinence. As cultural agents, language was a major sphere through which cultural transmission took place. Working class women expressed a strong desire to maintain Spanish. The schools, then, became an area where many of these issues were contested.

### Living Arrangements

One of the first problems Puerto Rican families faced upon arrival in Chicago was living arrangements. Puerto Ricans who moved to Chicago in the family network had often a period of temporary living arrangements with the same family members who facilitated the move. For some working class women the transition was easy. A crowded apartment with lots of family members provided a sense of continuity and security. When Alicia arrived in Chicago in the 1950's to get married, she shared an apartment with a cousin and her family. In those days, she recalled, "you rented the apartments with furniture" and "we lived like one big family". Shortly after establishing some economic solvency families moved into their

own apartments.

More frequently working class migrant women talked about the difficulties adjusting to living with other relatives. Temporary living arrangements ranged from six months to a year, depending on how fast the family could survive on their own and were able to find adequate housing. Within this context, informal reciprocity norms in Chicago dictated that the newly arrived wife would help clean and prepare food for those who were employed. In the 1950's, Rita, her children and her husband came to live with her sister-in-law.

[M]y husband took us to my sister-in-law's house. There "pase la salsa y el guayacan" [popular expression denoting a very hard time]. We had four kids and no house of our own. Imagine? We had to wait to shower after everyone in the other family had taken their shower. If I had my little girl in the bathtub and one of her [sister-in-law] children wanted to shower I had to hurry up and leave them use the shower. For cooking it was worst. I suffered a lot.

At this point, the interview was interrupted because Rita started crying in uncontrollable sobs. She took a deep breath and in her sobs continued describing that first year of her arrival in Chicago which for her seemed like a century.

It was so sad. From there we moved to a basement. It was so small. I had my little living room and kitchen. It was not prepared to be occupied but upon her insistence we moved. When I was living with her I was used to do everything for her. I cooked, I cleaned the house. You see because she worked and after work she went to school. She had a house with eight rooms and we rented one room. You had to see all the things that happened to believe it. I shared everything with her, but she did not. She used to buy "cakes" for her children and would not share it with ours. She used to tell me things about my husband that were very hurtful and painful.



similarly, Victoria hated living with her in-laws and thought it to be horrible

I stayed home and took care of the children. I cleaned the house. It was very difficult. On top of that I was very shy. I did not dare even to open the refrigerator to get something to drink. I tried to keep a low profile and not be a bother to them.

Agnes, went to live with the same relatives who persuaded her and her husband to move from Puerto Rico. She worked for a while but stopped when she became pregnant. Now unemployed she spent much of her time in the house. She found herself baby sitting and doing chores as if she were a maid and the living arrangements which she thought were going to be temporary began to seem permanent. Discomforted, she confronted her husband and proclaimed "either you find me an apartment or I'm going back to Puerto Rico". They moved out and found their own place.

But, finding an adequate apartment was no easy task. Padilla (1987:117) writes that Puerto Ricans "were trapped in the most run-down residential sections in their communities not only because of poverty but also because of a stringent pattern of housing discrimination". Teresa and her husband experienced the effects of this discrimination and poverty

[W]hen we went apartment hunting if they saw that we were Hispanics and the rent was \$60.00, they asked us \$90.00. We could never find an affordable apartment. It was very difficult to find decent housing.

Others were asked "are you Puerto Rican?" and were told "we don't rent to Puerto Ricans". Agnes, remembered the kind of

problems she confronted,

when I was looking for apartment around Kildare and Potomac I found a lot of problems. That area was an area where a lot of Europeans lived and when I inquired about apartment openings they closed the door on my face. And you know what? I did not understand why they would do something like that.

A strategy families used to deal with discrimination was looking for apartments with more than one unit available. Other family members were told about the vacancies so that they might move together. Some families talked to landlords and found apartments for family or friends who were still in Puerto Rico. Occasionally, members of families pooled their resources to buy a multi-unit building enabling families of brothers and sisters to occupy the apartment building. Daniela's sister and her family lived on the first floor of a building they share-bought, Daniela and her family lived on the second floor, and her sister's family lived on the third. By living close together they could help one another more easily.

In addition to these issues, Puerto Ricans struggled with the idea of buying property because it implied a commitment to making Chicago their permanent home. Consequently, families moved from residencies of relatives, to rental properties, to ownership and back to Puerto Rico. Rita's husband resisted buying property perhaps because it represented a commitment on his part to stay in Chicago and giving up the dream to return to the Island. To Rita, in contrast, investing in property meant the possibility of renting extra rooms and bring another

source of income for the household. The family had been renting an apartment for a while and Rita wanted a house. She enlisted her children to help her in her search. And when the time came she confronted her husband.

My husband had some money saved to buy a house but he kept putting it off. And when I said something, he would not pay attention to what I said because he claimed I did not know anything. He never supported my ideas. One day, I confronted him and I told him that we needed to get a house. But since we had no car we had to rely on the newspaper and what we saw around the neighborhood. One day, my youngest son on his way from school saw this little house. I went there with him to see the house. There were two Polish brothers that were selling the house. Another Puerto Rican lady was also interested in the house and they told me she had priority because she had come to see the house first. I went back to my house and told him [husband] about the house. He told me that there was no money. That we could not afford it. But I kept on and I convinced him to come and see the house. We bought the house.

Rita and her family lived in the house on Claremont Street for two years. They sold it only because they planned to return to Puerto Rico. But the trip to Puerto Rico did not materialize and they were again without a house. The family rented a big apartment on Winchester Avenue, "an old apartment where I learned to paint and fix things despite the fact that my husband did not want to give me any money, he was already wasting a lot of money on his drinking". When the apartment building was put up for sale, Rita persuaded her husband once again to invest. Grudgingly he bought it and Rita became a landlord, renovating the apartments, raising the rents, using her initiative and shrewd business practices to increase her earnings, despite her husband's disapproval. The next most

important task after finding a place to live was work. As I suggested in Chapter II, since working class families moved in stages, husbands usually had found work by the time the rest of the family arrived.

### Juggling Family and Work

In Puerto Rican culture there is a gender specific division of labor which consist of men's work ("trabajo de hombre") as providers and women's work (trabajo de mujer) as the caretakers of the home and the children (Rogler and Cooney, 1984). Underlying this gender division of labor is a patriarchal ideology, machismo, which emphasizes men's sexual freedom, virility, aggressiveness and women's sexual repression and submission (Acosta-Belen, 1986). Machismo represents the male ideal and plays an important role in maintaining sexual restrictions and the subordination of women. This ideology rationalizes a double standard where a woman can be seen as "la mujer buena o de la casa" (a good woman) or as "una mujer mala o de la calle" (a bad woman and a woman of the streets). Men have to show that "el lleva los pantalones en la casa" (he is the one who wears the pants in the family) and are free to "echar una canita al aire" (literally meaning, blow a gray hair to the wind, culturally it means to have an affair).

The counterpart of machismo is "marianismo" in which the Virgin Mary is seen as the role model (Sanchez-Ayendez,

1991:628). Within this context, a woman's sexual purity and virginity is a cultural imperative. Motherhood, in Puerto Rican culture, lies at the center of such ideology as one of the important roles a woman plays. A woman is viewed in light of her relationship to her children and as Carmen, one of my informants put it, in her ability to "dar buenos ejemplos" (provide a good role model).

Safa (1976) observed that among working class Puerto Ricans gender roles are very rigid. Although industrialization and the entrance of women in the labor force completely contradicts this ideal of "la mujer es de la casa" (women belong to the home), in Puerto Rico the domestic role of working class remains intact. Working mothers are primarily responsible for the care of the home and the children.

In Chicago, in keeping with this ideology surrounding family values, some husbands resisted the idea of their wives working and took a double shift so that wives could stay home, take care of the children, and do housework. Carmen stayed home to care for her children and was very proud of her accomplishments as a mother. She boasted of how the school teachers congratulated her for neatness and cleanliness of her children. Speaking proudly of her family's reaction to her first visit to Puerto Rico after a thirty year absence, Carmen reflected on her role as a mother.

It was the first time I was far away from my children. They called me every day. I went for a month, but stayed only three weeks... I'm thankful to God because I was able to give my children "buenos ejemplos"<sup>2</sup>. They never

had a "babysitter". I was their slave. I never worked. Now, I'm working but is more for therapy purposes.... I'm thankful to God that I was able to raise nine children and no one helped me because I didn't have anyone in Chicago. Today, I think to myself, "but how did I manage? You know that nowadays women have a child and they want to die. The patience I had.

But, economic necessity obliged other husbands to conform to women's work outside the home. Like Lucy said: "I did not come here to work, but I had to". Alicia elaborates,

in those days one pay check was like nothing. we put together both paychecks and there were times that he had very little next to nothing left. By that time there were other relatives living with us and there were lots of mouths to feed.

In the 1950's, Chicago's economy offered new immigrants plenty of job opportunities in the booming manufacturing sector. In fact, the same network of family and friends that helped in the process of migration, helped working wives find employment in Chicago factories. Josefa, Lucy, Luz, Rita, Teresa, and even Lupe, as a single woman, all reported to have worked in factories.

For most married working class women, employment was a temporary necessity. The way women talked about their work experiences reflected this attitude. Josefa and her husband worked not only to meet the family needs for also to take care of the medical expenses of their child. When her daughter started going to school she stopped working. Alicia worked in a factory prior to getting pregnant, and after having the baby she stopped working. But, when they wanted to buy a house, Alicia went back to work for two years. After her second child

she stopped working altogether. Brunilda started working in a factory immediately upon arrival from Puerto Rico. But when she became pregnant she stopped working. Lucy was the only married respondent who stayed in the factory for a prolonged period of time. But when she got sick she stopped working altogether as well.

Although most working class married women gave in to their husband's wishes of staying home, Rita illustrates how a woman resisted those traditional roles and sought to change them. Rita's husband did not want her to work. According to Rita,

after I got to Chicago my husband didn't want me to work. But I wanted to work. I wanted to work because you can meet people, learn new things and one can also leave the house for a while. I saw all the women in the family, his sisters and cousins, working and earning some money and I wanted to work too. They used to tell me that I should be working. But I had four children and who was going to take care of them?

Rita succumbed to the pressure and started working secretly. She worked "a la escondida" (hiding) for about three months. When asked how she managed to work without her husband knowing Rita replied that

since he left to work very early I found someone to take care of my smallest child, and the others went to school. My work hours were from 9:00 to 3:30 so by the time my husband got home I had everything done. I had the house clean, the children were cleaned and had eaten, and I was all put together. My husband did not like when I was not put together.

Rita eventually told her husband about her work escapades because she did not like doing things "a la escondida" (in

hiding). When asked how she managed to tell him, she replied

one night when he came home I had fixed him his favorite dish and he was sitting on the couch and I told him that I was working. I told him that I had talked to Maggie and that she told me that they were recruiting. I told him that I went [to the factory site] just to see if I could do that kind of work. He told me: "I don't think so, I don't think you are going to keep it because I want you to take care of the children. What if something happens to you, who is going to take care of you, you don't know English".

Her husband's traditionalism was too great, however, and Rita gave up working. To relent was a blow because the money she had earned had gone to clothing the children and to purchase a sewing machine. Note the tone of pride:

With the money I earned I was able to buy my sewing machine and I felt so proud of myself that I was able to buy it with my own money. We saved a lot of money afterwards. I sew for the family, I felt so proud.

As Rita's case illustrates, she gave in to her husband's traditionalism, but even within the confines of the house she could still find a source of pride. She may have stopped working but her contributions to the household continued as she was able to sew her children's clothing and other items for the house and the family. Eventually, her husband who had a printing business, gave in and allowed her to make and sell "capias"<sup>3</sup> as part time work. But, it did not last for long.

Others reported to have stopped working for wages but they continued to contribute to the family's income by working in their husband's neighborhood stores. Josefa, Lucy, and Teresa, all reported that their husbands had started neighbor-



hood businesses and that they "helped" them in the stores. They called it "helped" but they actually ran the stores while their husbands worked elsewhere.

Puerto Rican men may have accommodated to the wife's employment but the traditional division of labor within the family did not change. Lucy best articulated the problems of working women,

it was very hard work because I had to take care of the house, the children and the store. Since my husband never learned how to drive I had to learn to drive. I had to go to the warehouse, do the bookkeeping, everything. In the store I used to do everything. My husband helped but I was practically in charge of everything.

### Child Care

Puerto Rican working mothers regardless whether they worked outside the home or with their husbands in the family business, were still responsible for the care of the children and housework. Child care first became a problem at the time of migration as they could not afford to travel all at once. A strategy used to deal with this problem was leaving the children in Puerto Rico in the care of grandparents. This arrangement has been a widespread practice in the island for many years. A broken marriage, military service, death, or work responsibilities are often reasons for using such arrangements. Asuncion left her daughters with her mother for six months while she establish herself in Chicago. Asuncion's children also migrated later in stages.

Once the family was in Chicago women developed short term

arrangements to deal with the daily problems of child care. Shift work represented one strategy couples used to allow these women to stay home with the children. The husband worked the day shift and the wife the night shift. Haydee's father worked the day shift in a factory while her mother worked the evening shift as a cook in a hotel. Josefa worked the night shift in a candy factory, and her husband worked the day shift. I asked Josefa if she ever switched with her husband where he worked nights and she worked days? She replied in the negative because such work routine allowed her to take care of her daughter during the day.

When children were schoolage, both husband and wife might be able to work during the day. For wives, however, there was always the added responsibility of returning home to care for the children and do the household chores. Here, girls were introduced to the household responsibilities very early and were left to care for younger brothers and sisters. When Claudia reached age nine she acquired household responsibilities. She was given keys to the apartment, and after school she was expected to clean the kitchen, pick up around the house and start dinner.<sup>4</sup> This was also a way mothers trained their daughters in the traditional gender roles.

Given the ease of migration, other working class women brought over relatives with them to help care for the children. Lucy and Daniela brought her mother to help take care of the children. Teresa brought her younger sister to Chicago so

that she could help take care of the children.

She stayed home and took care of my children while I went to work and would provide for her. She took care of my children for two years until she met a fellow Puerto Rican in 1958 and got married. That was when I had to find somebody else to take care of my girls.

Then a woman in her building took care of them for a small fee. Teresa gave her \$12.00 weekly for the two girls and provided their food.

Sanchez-Korrol (1983A:98) found the same kind of informal child care practices in the early "colonias" in New York City in which "childcare tasks previously undertaken by relatives defaulted to friends and acquaintances outside the kinship network who provided the services in exchange for a prearranged fee". This grass-roots system served both those who were employed and those who had to stay at home. The arrangement usually consisted of bringing child, food, and additional clothing to the "mother-substitute" and collecting the child after work. This system provided a practical way to increase family earnings and was an extra legal system with advantages not found in established childcare institutions". These informal childcare arrangements allowed children to be cared for in a familiar environment, in which there was mutual trust, agreement between the adults involved, and flexibility. Children were cared for in a family settings where the language, customs, and Puerto Rican traditions were reinforced.

When Teresa stopped working she became a childcare

provider for the women in her building. Now, she no longer cares for other people's children but instead cares for her own grandchildren. Teresa's history represents a typical cycle of care: placing her children with a neighborhood while she worked, carrying for other neighbor's children while they worked, and finally caring for her own children's children, perpetuating such care practices perhaps to another generation.

For Iris, a divorced working class mother, the lack of childcare added to the pain of settlement. Because she left for work before her children awakened for school, she had to call them from work to awake them.

I used to go to work in tears thinking that I wanted to take care of my children but I could not because I had to work. I used to think to myself, what if there is a fire? I used to get up very early and prepared them breakfast, oatmeal and eggs. So that when they got up they had something to eat. And around seven or eight in the morning I used to call them by phone them so they would get up to go to school.

But that was not enough.

[M]y next problem was that they got out of school at 3:00 and I got out at 3:30 p.m. I counted the minutes so that I could get home. I was used to go church and ask God, Almighty to help me. But the problem was worst in the summer time. What was I going to do?

By then, Iris was still living in Geneva, Illinois. In Geneva, the church she attended could accommodate her needs. But, in Chicago this kind of arrangement was rare because at the beginning Chicago churches were not very responsive to Puerto Ricans.

In my desperation I went to my priest, with my little

English I told him my problem that I could not leave my children alone five days of the week... He told me to give him my phone number he'd see what he could do. I remember it was Wednesday when he called and told me he had found a solution to my problem. He told me that "there is a lady who volunteers for the church and she is willing to take care of your children but she wants to come to your home to meet them". Apparently, she was a rich lady that did not work. She came to my house to meet Cecilia and Marcos and told me: "don't worry, I am going to take care of your kids". She was so good to my children. She gave them food, toys, clothes. I was so happy.

When she relocated to Chicago, Iris' daughter was old enough to begin to take care of her younger brother and to assume household responsibilities.

[M]y daughter was a responsible child from very early on. She has always been that way. She was used to wake up my son, dress him up and go to school together.

While receiving unemployment benefits she went to school to improve her English and learn some other skills. Iris recalled

I worked in that factory for a year and when they closed the factory I told myself this is my opportunity to go back to school. I didn't like working in the factory. I suffered a lot. I told myself that I could not work in a factory for the rest of my life that I needed to find something better. I went to school at Waubensee College in Aurora. There I took English and secretarial classes. I was going to get sharp and get myself a better job.

When Iris moved from Geneva to Chicago she worked temporarily as a singer in a night club. She had done this earlier while working in the factory. The realization that she could not continue in that kind of job situation pushed her to take more classes. She added

I took class after class. This time I was taking classes at Wright Community College. After that I went in a job search. I remember that my second job was with an international organization for handicapped children. I was really lucky. I went and the very first day they

placed me. There I lasted like two years. But, again the company left town. From there I worked in another company. They distributed greeting cards. While I was working there I was looking in the newspaper one day and I saw an advertisement for a typing job in a company called Advance Transformers. And I took chance. (Eso si, que yo era muy arriesgada). I went to interview with no expectations. If I pass the test and they give me the job well if not I still have my other job. I took the test and they told me "we will contact you". The next morning when I was getting ready to go to work they called me. It has been nine years since I started working with them.

For Iris education became a strategy that allowed her to deal with the changing labor market in Chicago and her family demands as a provider. To involve her daughter in income producing activities was also another coping strategy.

Within this group of working class women, Laura stands out as a case on her own. Given the circumstances she migrated to Chicago, Laura found herself bound to household responsibilities in the same way as married women. From work she came home every night to cook and clean for her brother. Laura worked in factory work for a number of years until she managed to learn enough English to break away. Her first factory job was in a plastics factory around Belmont and Central Park. From there she moved to Zenith Electronics. The working environment there was very rough and in Zenith she only worked for a couple of weeks. Her last factory job was in Williams Electronic. Laura said she was laid off there because her boss claimed she was too slow. While working she started taking English classes in the evenings. Then, she started cosmetology school, continuing to do factory work until she

was able to finish her cosmetology degree. By 1970, she and another women who had graduated with her had opened up a beauty salon. Within a year her partner had returned to Puerto Rico and Laura bought her out. She has been in the cosmetology business since. But even this activity is precarious because, as she woefully complained, "there is too much competition". Laura, never married, and for the last six years she had been living with a man from Brazil.

### Cultural Agents

Working class Puerto Rican women recognized that they were living in a different cultural environment and they had the added responsibility to maintain their cultural traditions, even though those cultural traditions sometimes conflicted with their new found roles in Chicago. Carmen was critical of people who came to Chicago and forgot Puerto Rican culture and customs suggesting that "if one forgets our beautiful culture, everything will be gone". Others worried that if children lost their knowledge of Puerto Rican culture and values in Chicago they would also loose their identity.

[A] compelling reason to maintain and keep Puerto Rican culture alive is to be able to pass it on to new generations. They need to be taught Puerto Rican values and culture. We don't need to know that we are Puerto Ricans. We know we are Puerto Ricans. But our children don't. They don't know what it means.

One of the most important ways of imparting their cultural legacy was through language. Language is also a way of

affirming culture. In the process of reproducing Puerto Rican cultural patterns, working class women used language to pass onto their children traditions and stories of their childhood. Spanish was the only language first generation migrant women knew, thus the only way they communicated with their children and family. Since families never ruled out the possibility of returning home, knowing Spanish was important if they were to returned to Puerto Rico.

Daniela remembered that in the 1950's the Puerto Rican community began to organize around churches, offering in addition of the family, a network, of personal friends and a source of support. Church attendance was also very important because it helped in the socialization of girls as a strong religious environment inculcated the virtues of virginity and sexual purity. Catholic groups, such as "Las Hijas de Maria" provided an outlet of social activities for both mothers and daughters and helped socialized daughters in the values of service. Haydee, who as a girl was one of the "Las Hijas de Maria", recalled that they used to go to local hospitals and pray for people. Lucy's daughter remember that

the parties they gave in church were our only opportunities to get out. My father was so strict. I used to hate that he was so strict. If my older sister and I wanted to go to the carnival and asked for his permission, he asked why? One day my sister went to a party at the church without his permission and he got so mad.

Puerto Rican migrants in Chicago turned to the Catholic church looking for an institutional foundation in the process of building community life. Daniela and her family, for instance,



reported participating in church activities on a regular basis. Daniela observed that it was within the church that she felt the emergence of a Puerto Rican community.

The community along 63th Avenue was one of the first that started to get organized around "la iglesia Santa Clara". They were very strong. Los Caballeros de San Juan evolved from there. Another group was called "Los Hermanos de la familia De Dios". They started a group to help Puerto Rican families move from Puerto Rico to Chicago. Then, they spread around parishes. The parishes San Jose, Santa Clara, San Marcos were very visible.

Rosita also remembered some of the early community life,

in 1955 we had already had a parade which had been organized by Elias Dias y Perez along Jackson Boulevard. That was the first parade and we did not have another one until 1966. But there were lots of groups. There was one organization called Los Caballeros de San Juan who developed the Credit Union.

In the church, Puerto Rican women had an opportunity to meet other women, share their experiences and widen their network of people beyond those of the family. The organization Daniela and Rosita mentioned, Los Caballeros de San Juan (The Knights of Saint John), was very important in the early stages of neighborhood life.<sup>5</sup>

Haydee remembered that when she was growing up there were all kinds of social clubs which provided entertainment. These social clubs were instrumental in keeping the spirit of patriotism and ethnic identity. Town clubs-such as El Vega-bajeno, El Club de Lares-provided much of the cultural life of the early enclaves. Asuncion describes the importance of such clubs.

We had a little room where we gathered every once in a

while and sometimes we brought people from Puerto Rico. We had a baseball team. We helped each other. It was a form of sharing, we wanted to better ourselves, feel better about ourselves and helped each other along.

But, women recognized that their household responsibilities were often a limitation that prevented them from participating in other forms of communal life, beyond church attendance and the occasional dance or "fiestas". Their husbands, on the other hand, went out frequently to play dominos and participated of the street life. Rosita stated at the beginning she was not very involved with community activities because "at that time our major concern was being able to earn a livelihood, and adapting to living in Chicago". Carmen, whose husband was a barber, stated

at that time I spent most of the time at home, taking care of my children. It is now that I'm going out a little more.

She remembered how her husband spent a lot of time in the barber shop or at a club located along Damen Ave where he played dominos. Rita's husband had also a printing business and spent a lot of time in the printing business. Both Carmen and Rita remembered how on many occasions their husbands came home for dinner with unannounced guests.

A community manifestation of Puerto Rican women's roles as cultural agents takes the form of the Puerto Rican Day Parade. Although the parade is predominantly run by men, Asuncion, Delia, and Leida were involved with the Puerto Rican Day Parade at different levels. Asuncion, for instance, has

been with the Puerto Rican Parade over twenty five years. She rationalized her involvement with the parade as

for me it is another way of keeping Puerto Rico alive in our hearts. We need to feel proud of our culture. Because you are far from your country it does not mean that you are going to forget everything.

Her current position is "Chairman of the "Abrazo puertoriqueno" (The Puerto Rican Embrace). In one of her trips to her hometown of Vega Baja she participated in an activity called "EL Abrazo Popular" (The Popular Embrace). She said

it occurred to me that we could do that here. The embrace consist of taking all of the Puerto Ricans involved with the various community organizations and asked to come and shake hands and embraced one another at the beginning of the fiestas patronales.

Asuncion was disappointed because the first year that the embrace was organized many invited people failed to come. But because of her idea the embrace was instituted as part of the festivities.

At the time of the interview Leida was the vice-president of the committee. She had also been in charge of the Children's Pageant. They select a girl and a boy as pageants of the Parade. Another very important part of the parade is the selection of the Queen of Puerto Rican Parade. I asked Leida what were her responsibilities within the Parade. She replied

I do everything from sewing the dresses the little girls are going to use to helping with the coronation.

Delia is also a volunteer with the Puerto Rican Parade Committee. Delia directs a dance group called, "La Semillita".

she said

since I loved the "la musica jibara" (country Puerto Rican music) and the traditional dances, it occurred to me that could have a small dancing group to be part of the children's coronation activities. We taught a selected group of children the dances and we had our first performance last year. The mothers loved it and people kept calling on us to appear at local functions. Little by little we started collecting money to make the typical dresses and other uniforms. There are sixteen children, eight boys and eight girls. For each appearance we asked for donations to buy clothing and pay for our expenses. I feel so proud when I see them dancing.

Ethnic parades in general, and the Puerto Rican Parade in particular, are becoming permanent symbolic manifestations of racial/ethnic groups seeking to establish pride and place in their new environments. But the literature on ethnic parades, in general, and women's role and involvement in them, in particular, is very sparse.<sup>6</sup> As Asuncion, Delia, and Leida's comments suggest most of their involvement seemed an extension of the work women usually performed within the housework. Suggesting perhaps a public dimension to their responsibilities as cultural agents. Asuncion participated in the decision making, but Delia and Leida were foot soldiers helping with the arrangements for the various pageants and doing most of the sewing of the dresses to helping prepare to organizing a dance group.<sup>7</sup>

### Marital Problems

In addition to juggling family and work, four married working class women reported a range of problems with their

husbands from alcoholism, infidelity, to desertion. Rita reported that her husband started drinking and being unfaithful to her. Rita was aware of his problems but chose not to leave him. Instead, she endured the affair and her husband's alcoholism. He brought her considerable pain and stress until he died suddenly from his alcoholism in 1980. Interviewing elderly women in Massachusetts, Sanchez-Ayendez (1991) found that as long as men's behavior did not upset the balance in the household where men are the providers and women the center of the home, married women endured such bad behavior. Ana, one of her informants knew her husband was having an affair but believe that success in marriage depended on the women's ability "to make it work".

In fact, shortly after this incident since her husband was becoming less and less involved with the family affairs Rita took charge and began to go around her husband's authority. She rationalized her moves in terms of her family responsibilities. She had limitations, (a major one being her husband), but that did not prevent her from aggressive action. The home was her domain and it was her right to make decisions about it without the intervention of her husband who had abdicated any of his authority anyway because of his drinking. In the context of her marital problems, the story of how Rita bought a building illustrates a woman's resourcefulness and courage after years of living in Chicago.

I went to the bank and I asked for a loan. But they would not give it to me without my husband's signature. I kept

thinking how can I buy this house? I told my husband again and I asked him to come to the bank with me, I waited all morning long for him and he did not show up. I was so disillusioned. I really liked the house and I saw a lot of potential. I went back to the landlord and I told him that I was really interested and that I wanted to buy the house if he gave it to me for \$10,000.00. Some people that lived in the building that knew me supported me and told the landlord that I was a good person. I had done a little bit of work and I had some money saved but not enough.

Faced with this problem, Rita took an alternative route: ask a friend for a loan.

I had this friend and she told me about this Cuban man who could lend me the money. I went talked to him and I asked him to loan me 5,000.00. But that it had to be through a lawyer. I wanted to do it legal. The lawyer told him how are you going to loan this woman all that money? I was furious. I told the Cuban that I give him my word that if I did not respond that he could the take the house from me.

Rita not only had to face the institutional discrimination in the banking industry but also the gender bias from the lawyer who discouraged her friend from lending her the money. Eventually, he lend her the money and with some savings from her children, she bought the house.

Now, the problem was how to tell my husband about it. Well, I fixed the house very nice before we moved. One night he came home drunk laid on the couch and I told the kids that tonight we are moving to the new house. We borrowed a big truck and moved overnight. The following morning when my husband woke up, everything was gone. [Laughing] I was fixing breakfast in the new house and suddenly I remembered that we had left him behind. I rushed to the house, talked to him and told him that this apartment was old that I did not like it and that we should sell it. I told him that I had rented out a little house and we had moved overnight.... He paid the rent and he did not know the house was ours. He gave me the money for the rent and I invested it. I rented a house in the back and within a year I had the house paid. One day I was going to tell him but he got sick. We took him to the hospital on Friday and by Sunday he had died. Imagine, he

died and never knew I had bought the house we were living in.

years after her husband died, Rita remarried her husband's best friend whose wife had abandoned him and his children. She helped him raised his family while he helped her with her husband's alcoholism. Rita and Carlos<sup>8</sup> went through a lot together with their respective families. In old age they found themselves alone and decided to stay together. Rita states

that man was the first person I met when I came from Puerto Rico. He was a good man. He helped my husband through his problems. I helped him raised his family because his wife abandoned him. Since we were both alone we decided to get married. But I told him that if his children opposed the marriage that we were not going to get married. [At this point her husband entered the room]. We were married and we went to Puerto Rico for our honeymoon. He is a good man. He is ugly but he is good.

At some point after finishing interviewing I called to touch base with Rita. Her daughter, Marilyn, told me that her mother had returned to Puerto Rico for good. But in July, 1991, Rita and her husband returned to Chicago because her youngest daughter was pregnant and she could not bear the separation from her grandchildren.

Nellie was conscious of her subordination to her husband and endured it for a good part of her marriage. He was a gambler, even taking her paycheck to pay for his habits, and he turned abusive as his drinking increased. Nellie remembered the fateful day when her marriage came apart

he picked me up at work and when we got home he wanted me to help him carry some bags. I was very tired and did not want to. He hit me right there in the street. That was it. I left him and went to my mother's place. I lived

with my mother for a week. But one day he showed up at work, put a knife to my neck and told me that he was going to kill me if I did not go back with him. So, I told him I would, but first we must go to my mother's to pick up my stuff. That was the trick when we got there I told him that I was not going with him. That was on a Friday, the following Saturday he got in trouble with the police and fled to New York.

Nellie became a single mother and had to take two jobs in order to support herself and her family. She recalled,

it was so hard to find someone to take care of the children while I was at work. One day my mom was gone to New York for a short trip and the police came and took my children. I was lucky because the two ladies that lived next to me went with me to the police station and helped me. They told the police that I was a good and responsible mother. They gave them back to me and I had to leave a job.

The lack of childcare was a major barrier to Nellie's search for work and she was forced to rely on the welfare system for survival. Nellie remembered that the day she went to the welfare office, a welfare officer lectured her in English about her responsibilities as a mother. Nellie left the office before the caseworker was finished and took a factory job. This time she asked a woman in her building to help her with her children for a small fee. Nellie worked for twelve years at Zenith. In fact, she worked her way up to production supervisor. After her children were grown, Nellie got an Affirmative Action loan and was able to open her own business.

Victoria and Agnes had similar problems with their husbands and became single mothers, having to rely on welfare to survive. Victoria's husband could not hold a job and disappeared for long periods of time. According to Victoria,



we were legally married for eleven years and in that period we had four children. Within that period he took off more than twenty five times leaving me stranded with the children.

Her problems go back to Puerto Rico where they lived when she returned to give birth to her second baby. There her husband started to disappear overnight. She took him to court for desertion and filed a complaint against him for his arrest. He returned teary-eyed and repentant, promising he would not do it again. She withdrew the complaint, but within a month he had disappeared again, this time fleeing to Chicago. He wrote her and sent her plane tickets. Victoria returned to Chicago but the problems continued there. She divorced him and in order to support herself she went on welfare. Victoria recalled the day her sister-in-law took her to the welfare office.

I felt so ashamed. I was not raised to beg for money. In Puerto Rico, we had very little but we never asked for anything. My mother worked and even though she earned very little we stretched it. When I went to the welfare office my English was not very good. That's why my sister-in-law went with me. Social workers were so rude. They asked my sister-in-law whether I knew that there were contraceptives so that I could avoid having so many children. She fought with them. She later told me what had happened.

Victoria lived on welfare for a number of years, but it was not very reliable. She remembered a particular crisis which, in a way, helped her leave welfare. For some reason, the welfare office had started reviewing her case and stopped sending her money. For seven months she had no means to support herself and her family. Up to the point when she lost

control and became very ill or as she put it "me enferme de los nervios". Pelto, Roman, and Liriano (1982) found that Puerto Rican single parents in Hartford also reported suffering from this condition of nervous breakdown. They describe this condition as a mental illness which ranges from mild anxieties, to uncontrollable outburst to depressions and suicidal tendencies. Nervios is a situational illness and not the fault of the victim. While in the hospital a Lutheran pastor came to see her at her mother's request.

He spoke Spanish beautifully and perfectly. He seemed to care about Hispanic problems. He rescued me. When I left the hospital, he offered me a part-time job.

Since her children were in school, she was able to work her schedule around them and continued taking welfare while working part-time. She attended a GED program with her church, and passed the State examination. Victoria reflected on her choices and what they meant to her

It is very difficult to raise your family here just working by yourself. I was on welfare but I was able to raise my children without the drug problem or the gang problem. That's what makes me feel good.

Agnes' problems with her husband started after they moved to Chicago. Puzzled by the marital problems she attempted to rationalize what had happened. Agnes felt that

people come here with the dream of working hard, saving some money and returning to one's homeland. But something happens to men. Couples arrive in this country and their marriages fall apart... I think it has to do with their work. They come to work in those factories and they lose control. They lose sense of reality. They think that their only responsibility is to provide for the family.

They come put the food on the table and off they go to the streets.

Agnes' husband loved to spend money on automobiles. The family's saving was squandered on cars and car parts. To no avail, Agnes tried to cope by confronting him about the spending and reminding him of their original goals of saving to return to Puerto Rico. But it was hopeless and they divorced in 1978. Unable to support herself she turned to welfare. Her daughters were still very young when she divorced and that was one of her considerations for staying alone and not remarrying. She said

I always thought of my daughters. I used to tell myself how I am going to allow a stranger to come into our house and take charge of our lives. Sometimes children do not adapt well to a stepfather. Me, no, no, I prefer to raise my daughters alone.

I am a person who is very independent I like to depend on my own, and I realized that in order for me to be able to move forward and give something to my children I was going to go back to school. I did not want to work all my life in a factory. So, I took public aid and started going to school.

She started going to school but, as she put it, "it was not very stable". So she moved from work to welfare and back to work. At the time of the interview, she worked part time and received food coupons.

Lupe came to Chicago as a single migrant. She quickly married in order to break away from her brother's over-protectiveness. A pattern that poor and working class women had developed in Puerto Rico. Safa (1976) found that in Puerto Rico, working class and poor Puerto Ricans often use marriage

as a strategy to escape the confinement of parents, only to face the tyranny of their husbands. Actually the first few years of her marriage were pretty good, but when her husband was laid off

he started playing music with a group. They played all over Chicago. In the evenings he was gone playing and drinking and during the day he was playing dominos and hanging around with his friends. I did not like that... I was so frustrated. He used to disappear overnight.

Lupe had also to rely on welfare. But since Lupe had been raised a devout Catholic, she turned to the Church to find support. Unsatisfied with the Catholic church she left the church and converted to the pentecostal faith. I asked her what happened that pushed her towards conversion, to which she responded

this is something you may not understand. I was raised a Catholic, all my family are Catholics. I went through all the different groups in the Catholic church like "Hijas de Maria", .... I was having problems with my husband and in his family there was a lot of people that were pentecostal and one day they invited me to a special activity and have not left since. Converting to pentecostal was a very personal experience it is very difficult to explain. I even stopped having problems with my husband.

Lupe's husband also converted to the church.

Some husbands abandoned the family altogether. Ivan, now a community leader, and one of my informants, remembered his mother's struggle to survive on her own. Within a year after relocating to Chicago, his family was abandoned by his father. It was the most traumatic event in his life,

after my father abandoned us my mother was left with the responsibilities of taking care of us. It was the most difficult time of our lives. We were so poor. Really, I

don't have words to describe the kind of situation we lived. But my mother suffered the most. She was a very proud woman. Even in the most difficult situations, she always found happiness and pride. She always tried keeping us clean and neat that was her pride.

As these cases reflect, when confronted with marital problems working class Puerto Rican women developed a number of strategies. They divorced their husbands but unable to support themselves they had to rely on welfare. Lupe, Agnes, and Victoria found in their religious communities a way to deal with her problems. The experiences of Nellie, Victoria, and Agnes show how migration affects family relations resulting in the emergence of single headed households.

### Community Struggles

Puerto Rican parents cared a great deal about the education of their children. They recognized the value of education as a means for upward mobility in the United States. Many raised their children instilling in them the importance of education. But, when children reached school age, the mother's determination to hold on to the language brought early migrant women into conflict with school officials since bilingual education was nonexistent. Carmen, argued with her children about speaking Spanish at home. But,

my children kept coming home speaking in English and I kept telling them that at home they spoke Spanish. My children told me: "my teacher does not want me to talk in Spanish". I responded: "tell your teacher that in school you will talk and learn English but that at home you will speak Spanish". I taught them Spanish. Now, they are thankful for the little Spanish they know.

In ways such as this one, the school became an area where many issues arose and were contested. Some Puerto Rican mothers took it upon themselves to make Chicago's public school system more responsive to their children's needs. In fact, the problems parents and children faced within the school system became one of the first issues around which the community organized. Puerto Rican mothers protested the school conditions, parental representation on the school council, and rules that did not allow them to enter the school with the children, among other issues. Parents and community leaders began to organize demonstrations and demand changes in the school system. A major problem had always been lack of bilingual education. As a result, of their demonstrations, the city sponsored the teacher exchange program that eventually became a teacher recruitment. Nonetheless, the early bilingual programs were developed to help children make the transition from a predominantly Spanish to an English speaking one. Any notion of preserving the Puerto Rican, or Latino culture, was absent.

### Conclusion

Working class migrant women and their families encountered a number of obstacles as newcomers to Chicago. They worked to maintain family life among the tensions and adversities of migration. As family units, and as individuals, Puerto Rican women developed all kinds of strategies to deal with the "darker side of migration".

Living with relatives was both a family strategy and a source of problems between husband and wife, and even between women. As families wrestled with the idea of making Chicago their permanent home life in Chicago became even more complicated. As Rita's story suggest, older working class saw their homes as personal domain, one in which decisions about it actually empowered her.

As in Puerto Rico, some married working class joined the labor force but only temporarily. Husbands accommodated to their wives employment but the gendered division of labor within the household did not change at all. Housework and the care of children continued to be the major responsibility of the women. Here, women created their own individual strategies in dealing with child care. The strategies women developed reflect the nature of Puerto Rican migration to the extent that with relative ease families could leave children behind with other relatives and eventually send for them. A common strategy was to bring another female relative to help with childcare. In this process, Puerto Rican women actually

created a pattern of female migration. The childcare strategies also reflect the process of socialization of young girls into traditional gender roles. For divorced women with children, the problems of child care added to the pains and struggles of settlement. In fact, when marriages failed, as in Nellie, Victoria, and Agnes's case, the problem of childcare was a major barrier to their search for work. For them it meant becoming heads of household, slipping into poverty and having to rely on the welfare system to be able to survive. Much maneuvering was required to keep the family together. Women tried to provide as much continuity in the process of forming and recreating family life in Chicago even when husbands deserted them.

Implicit in the accounts of these working class women is also a story about their work histories. As other immigrant women, Puerto Rican women took jobs at the bottom of the labor hierarchy. Married working class women took jobs that did not threaten the traditional family structure as reflected in their attitudes about work. For divorced and single women, factory work was transitional; as they acquired more education and skills they move up in the occupational ladder. Within this group of working class families, another work strategy seems evident. Along with their factory work, some families managed to set up neighborhood businesses and stores. Teresa and Lucy talked about how, for the most part, they managed and attended these stores as their husbands worked elsewhere.



Lastly, but not least important, is the little understood role women played in the recreating and maintaining of cultural values. Working class women held very strong beliefs about the importance of maintaining their Puerto Rican culture. Language was perhaps the most important way of affirming that identity. As the community kept growing, then they could rely on community institutions such as neighborhood clubs, church clubs, and eventually the ethnic parade. This role was not problem free to the extent that mothers encountered some resistance in the school system.

In general, the evidence which emerges from these accounts contrasts with the prevailing view of Puerto Rican women as passive and unimportant to the building of Puerto Rican culture and community in Chicago. Instead, it shows women as resourceful, inventive, and determined to overcome the obstacles that confronted them. Puerto Rican women were not resigned females, they were always actively devising strategies to improve their situation and that of their families.

## NOTES

1. Since the interview was conducted in Spanish the actual word she used for furnished and furniture was: "furnidos" and con la "furnitura", respectively. Those do not exist in Spanish. They are words that migrants have invented themselves.
2. In English the literal translation is "a good example", but culturally it means more. It means living an exemplary life, providing a good role model.
3. In Puerto Rico for baptisms, weddings, birthdays and all kinds of memorable celebrations guests receive a little souvenir called "capias" which they pin from their clothes.
4. Ewen (1983) found this same pattern of older children taking care of younger siblings and doing housework among Italian American families at the turn of the century.
5. Los Caballeros de San Juan (The Knights of Saint John) was founded in 1954 by a group of men within the structure of the Catholic Church. According to Padilla (1989:128) the initial location of Los Caballeros was in the Woodlawn area. The organization was heralded by Leo T. Mahon, an Irish Catholic priest who had been assigned to Woodlawn to work there with the expanding black population of the community. Several Puerto Rican residents approached Father Mahon requesting his help to develop activities and programs for their community. From this it developed into an ambitious grassroots movement. They went on to organize "concilios" (councils or branches) throughout the city wherever they found a Puerto Rican enclave. Los Caballeros dominated community life well into the 1960's providing a wide range of services from directing newly arrived migrants to social welfare agencies, supplying legal advice, helping with employment services, and forming recreational activities such as picnics, dances, baseball leagues. One activity which became a tradition for several years was the celebration of El Dia de San Juan (Saint John's Day). But the most notable involvement was the credit union. To this day, Los Caballeros continue to function as an alternative credit lending institution.
6. Schneider's (1990) comparison of the Puerto Rican and Polish parade in Philadelphia is the only study up to date which attempts to analyze the importance of such symbolic manifestations. Her findings are relevant here. By comparing these two ethnic presentations, Schneider (1990) wanted to understand the dynamic between newcomer and established group. She argued that while both parades contained the requisite floats, bands, and beauty queens, each presents images of

groups which became part of the American milieu within very different historical and social context. The Polish group emphasized the parish and other community organizations formed by the turn-of-the-century. The Puerto Rican group, with a variety of corporate sponsors, exhibited a migrant community established in Philadelphia during the era of urban decline and affirmative action. Problems currently affecting Puerto Ricans were evident in the parade. She found that participants in both parades negotiated and redefined the symbols used in the parade on an ongoing basis. Some people understood larger definitions of group identity, but disagreed on key aspects of membership and meaning. For instance, while links between Puerto Rico and Philadelphia were constantly emphasized, recent migration from the island was down played and often conveniently ignored. The relevance of Schneider's study is that it encourages a view of ethnicity not as a compilation of ascribed characteristics, but as a socially constructed and negotiated category.

7. My observations of the Puerto Rican Parade suggest Puerto Rican women's participation goes beyond that described by these respondents. In the parade, other segments of the Puerto Rican community can be seen involved. Leaders of community organizations organize floats and political leaders make appearances. Women who are organized around other themes participate in the parade, like Mothers Against Gangs and the National Organization of Puerto Rican Women. Suggesting that as a community event, women's participation in the parade cuts across class backgrounds and generations. Although to this day a woman has yet to hold the position of Chairman of the Puerto Rican Parade Committee. European Americans have for years used ethnic parades as a manifestation and celebration of ethnic identity. As newcomers, Puerto Ricans have also begun to use ethnic parades as a symbolic manifestation of ethnic status and as a way of claiming representation in the racial and ethnic mosaic within the city of Chicago.

8. Fictitious name.

## CHAPTER V

### THE FAMILY AND WORK EXPERIENCES OF EDUCATED WOMEN

#### Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the family and work experiences of educated migrant women in Chicago. Like working class migrants, educated women developed strategies both as families and as individuals in the process of adjusting to life in Chicago. The strategies they devised, however, reflected their class position. In contrast to working class families, educated migrants and their families did not experience such systematic exclusion in the housing market at the time of settlement. Their class background afforded them access to markets, often times outside the community, not available to working class women and their families. One of the first things Aurea and her husband did upon arrival in Chicago, for example, was to buy a house. Such an acquisition would have taken years for working class Puerto Ricans to achieve. Others like, Brunilda and her husband, given the circumstances of their migration did not live close to the community. Magdalena admitted to have lived in Chicago for at least a year without knowing where other Puerto Ricans resided. There were others, like Myrna and Yolanda, whose initial living arrangements were with family members who lived

in the community. But, eventually, when they moved out on their own, they left the community as well.

Since most educated migrants came to Chicago single and childless, it followed that they married and form new families as they settled in their new home. A very important difference here is that some informants did not marry within their group. Julia, Amanda, Angelica, Yolanda and Ines married and formed new families with men of other nationalities. Julia married a man from Guatemala. Yolanda married a man from the Dominican Republic. Angelica married a man that was half Arab and Malay. Ines and Sandra were the only ones that married within their own group. Marisa, who came as a divorced mother, re-married as well. She married an African-American. Amanda married a white ethnic. Madgalena is the only one within this group that remained single.

When juggling family and work responsibilities, educated and professional women gave their career goals equal standing alongside their family obligations. Educated women developed a number of coping strategies to balance family and work responsibilities. Some could afford to hire help when necessary or leave work temporarily as they planned to have families. For others, as in Brunilda's case, husbands helped with household chores and in taking care of the children. But, like working class women, educated and professional women also felt responsible for passing on to their children a legacy that is grounded on Puerto Rican culture, literature,

and Spanish language, even when some advocated bilingualism.

Educated migrant women confronted problems with their husbands as well. But, unlike working class women, they had resources, and fell back on their careers for support thus avoiding welfare. Angelica and Amanda both divorced their husbands. Sandra was the only respondent within this group that after a failed marriage had to rely on welfare.

In the interviews with educated women, the topic of community issues always surfaced. Almost all informants within this group participated in community activities, be that the local Puerto Rican community or the larger city-wide Latino community. For the most part, their community involvement ranged from joining local and established community groups to establishing new groups that met their professional and career interest. Two women reported becoming involved with local city politics and even running for elective office.

### Living Arrangements

Ironically, some educated migrants were able to find cheap housing because of real estate discriminatory practices against other ethnic groups. When Aurea and her husband arrived in Chicago in 1971 they were able to take advantage of "block busting".

In the area where we bought our property it was predominantly European, in particular Polish. They were selling their houses because real estate agents were utilizing fear and other racists tactics and in that panic we bought our house.

Educated migrants also experienced a temporary period of living with the same relatives who helped in the migration process. But, when they moved out many left the community. Myrna rented from her brother who owned a building in the community. At the time, living in the community was convenient, given that her business interests remained in the community. But, as soon as her interests changed, Myrna moved out as well.

Others like Julia never lived close to other Puerto Ricans. When Julia first moved to Chicago she found an apartment on the North Side, an area she described as predominantly "anglo". After marriage she and her husband bought a house in Rogers Park, still far from the Puerto Rican enclave. Initially Amanda lived close to the community but after her marriage she also moved, this time to the suburbs. I asked Amanda how she felt living so far from the community?

I am very involved in the community because I worked in the community. I have always lived outside the community. I don't know why. When I married John, for example, the house we bought happened to be in Skokie. We could not find anything to our liking in Chicago. Also, the prices were better.

Some single educated migrants, like Yolanda, lived with relatives for a while. Eventually, Yolanda also would marry and move to Glenview, another Chicago suburb. Marisa, a divorced woman with a child, lived with her aunt for a few months until she found an apartment, also out of the Puerto Rican community. She and Sandra were the only ones of this group that was renting. Ines and Sandra are the only ones who

lived for the most part in the community. Ines worked for the same community group that sponsored her move. Initially, Sandra lived with her sister in the community but eventually rented an apartment also in the Puerto Rican neighborhood.

There was also Rosa and her family who because of their religious affiliation and activities have never had to worry about housing arrangements. They came within a religious network and have lived in church property since they arrived in the city. In her case, given these housing arrangements, her point of reference in terms of communal orientation was her religious community. These housing arrangements provided her with a communal orientation beyond her ethnic identification and into the larger Methodist Spanish speaking community within the city. Therefore, it seems that in terms of living arrangements Puerto Rican women could easily leave behind the Puerto Rican neighborhood as long as family and career forces were strong enough.

### Balancing Family and Career

The experiences of educated migrants who are trying to balance work and family responsibilities defy easy categorization. Education brought more options and therefore many of these women were less anchored by their family demands. In addition, greater education and more flexible careers made these women less dependent upon husband and family structures. Some, like Brunilda and Rosa, placed their



career goals equally alongside their family responsibilities. Rosa talked about how in Puerto Rico she had managed to work full time and go to school to acquire an associate degree because her extended family helped take care of the children and the household chores. But, in Chicago, since they did not have their extended family, they had to adjust. First, since shortly after arriving in the city Rosa had given birth to her youngest child, she opted to stay home with her children until they were of school age. Rosa recognized she wanted to be with her children but also wanted to stay active.

When I arrived I saw a lot of possibilities, but I limited myself because I wanted to be with my children. When they baby was three years old I started thinking what can I do to keep myself busy? In Puerto Rico, I had always worked and I was not used to be a full time mom. I was very independent. I was very active. So I started helping the church. I started just because I wanted to get out of the house. Eventually it became a full time job.

Then when she started working full time her husband took on more household responsibilities.

Here he has learned all kinds of domestic chores. At times I get home from work and he has everything ready, I don't have to do a thing in the house. Other times, we decide to go out for dinner.

Brunilda, could not have made it without her husband who helped her take care of the children as she pursued both her educational goals and later her political activism.

[M]y husband was very understanding of my goals and political interest. We shared many of the household responsibilities... I have to admit that I spent a lot of time outside of the house during my children's childhood, for that I am a little bit sorry.

Later on she elaborated on her struggles and how she resolved them.

When you are a professional you face what Americans call "conflicting priorities".<sup>1</sup> Its like I want to be everywhere at the same time. For me community work has always interested me whereas being a housewife has always been secondary. I feel more gratification in my role as a professional.

At the time of the interview, Brunilda worked as a professor in a local university.

Aurea, on the other hand, placed her community activism (which for her was her professional orientation) alongside her family responsibilities.

For me both are part of the same process. I define my family network beyond the nuclear family, or better yet, beyond the traditional American concept of the nuclear family. My family is part of my social activism.

I asked whether this brought about any conflicts?

Without doubt, my husband is part of this sexist society and obviously expects privileges that this society accords men. But, we have worked and negotiated these roles quite successfully. Moreover, we both made a political pact. It worked rather well because he shares the same vision of the world and social change as I do.

Myrna, a divorced migrant woman, had a flexible work schedule that allowed her to combine both work and family responsibilities. Since she was self-employed she could drive her daughter to school and pick her up in the afternoon. When she started working for the city, she was able to hire another woman to help her with household chores.

During her first marriage Angelica and her husband were very well off and could afford to hire someone to help with housework and child care, thus allowing her to continue her

education. But after her divorce and re-marriage to a Puerto Rican man who was raised in Chicago, Angelica found balancing both work and family responsibilities more different. In fact, this time it was she who had to put her studies on hold to help with her husband's career.

I did not finish law school because my husband then was also going to law school and he had failed the exam twice. I feared what would happen if I graduated and he did not.

I ask her how she managed since she did not have any help, to which she replied,

Raul<sup>2</sup> was so different from my first husband... I like the way I lived with my first husband. He did not let me do any housework... But Raul could not understand the idea of having a maid. He had been raised here [in Chicago] and he was so old fashion in many ways. No one could take care of his daughter if it was not me or his mother who by then was living with us. At the beginning his mother helped with the cooking but he expected that I do everything. But, I took things easy.

As Angelica's case illustrates family and work arrangements depended heavily upon who these women married. Even though Raul was born in Chicago, the machismo of Puerto Rican culture had been effectively transplanted to the mainland communities and he responded in fairly traditional ways.

Sandra's experiences were similar to Angelica's. Sandra was going to school and needed only 32 credit hours to finish her bachelors degree when she met a Puerto Rican man. Shortly after she gave up her educational goals and became a full time housewife. When that relationship failed, however, she found herself with a baby, no college degree and very little work

experience. Like many working class women in similar situations she had to rely on welfare, for a year until a sister found her a job in a factory. Sandra talked about her factory work as something temporary until she could go back to study and get a better job.

Economics forbade Marisa's dreams of attending graduate school in Chicago. Her first job upon arrival in Chicago was as accounting clerk in a local hotel.

I knew nothing about accounting. But it was not very difficult to learn. Within a year I started checking newspapers to see if I could find something else. There was a job opening in a center for the mentally handicapped and not knowing really anything about it I went, applied and I was hired. There I worked for two years. I just wanted to learn. Again, I was ready to move to something better so I started checking the newspaper that is when I saw the job opening with Association House. It was pretty much what I was doing for the other job but I changed anyway.

Marisa's strategy was to put her own education on hold until her son had gone to college. Current policies toward minority students in higher education afford Marisa and her son to utilize various financial aid programs, thus relieving her from that obligation. She was able, then, to concentrate on her own career and educational goals.

Others, like Julia and Yolanda, left work as they began to plan their families. After working with the welfare office, Julia married a Guatemalan and took a job with the Illinois Migrant Council in the Mexican community. It was there that she became pregnant and decided to stay home with her first child for three years. Then Julia returned to work for the

Chicago City Colleges but again quit because of another pregnancy. This time she returned to work shortly after giving birth hiring a Latin American woman to help at home on a regular basis.

Yolanda met her husband while working as an agent for AllState Insurance Company. She married in 1982 and within a year was pregnant. She wanted to return to work but Allstate had policies that made it difficult for a married couples working for the company to be promoted. Instead she stayed home with the baby. At that time she started shopping for a day care center for her daughter so that she might return to work. While visiting one center she was offered a part time job. According to Yolanda, that was the ideal working environment because it allowed her to earn a little money and be close to her daughter at the same time.

I saw a job advertisement for a position in a credit bureau and I went to the interview, just for curiosity and they called me to work.

She worked as an assistant to the manager for two years when she became pregnant with her second child and stopped working altogether. When, her daughter started going to school she wanted to be more involved. But, at the time of the interview, she was pregnant with her third child and working part-time.

Some professional women organized their work schedules around that of their children's schooling. Rosa stayed home until her children reached school age and then returned to work. Others, like Amanda and Vilma, gave priority to their

careers and put off having a family altogether. Since the interviews were conducted, however, I learned that Vilma has had a child but remained working.

Magdalena is the only woman within this group that has remained single. At the beginning, she went from job to job until she met a group of professionals that put her in touch with the more organized and middle class segments of the Chicago Latino community, in general, and the Puerto Rican community in particular. Her first job after she arrived from Puerto Rico was with the welfare office. She worked there in the evenings for two years as a temporary case worker. She added

since I did not know what I was going to do in terms of staying in Chicago or returning to Puerto Rico, the working conditions were not the most favorable but since it met my most basic needs I was happy. I started having problems because I did not like the way things were being done, I started having problems and eventually I left the job. I was living in the North Side and I was feeling alienated and that was when my sister introduced me to a group of people who helped me overcome my loneliness and gave me a different perspective. A person within that group of Puerto Ricans told me about a job opening with the Latino Institute.

The continuous growth of the Spanish speaking population in the city encouraged the development of city-wide organizations and local Puerto Rican groups which, in turn, created occupational and leadership opportunities for professional and second-generation Latinos-be they Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, and Cubans-raised and educated in Chicago (Padilla, 1987). The Latino Institute is one of such

institutions. The job with the Latino Institute, allowed Magdalena to become acquainted with her professional counterparts in the Latino community of Chicago. As she worked with for the Latino Institute she became more acquainted with the more organized segments of the Puerto Rican community. Eventually she left the Latino Institute to take a series of jobs with various organizations in the Puerto Rican community. She described it as "consultant work". After working with the Puerto Rican Forum, she worked with Aspira and at the time of the interview, she was the executive director of a community group. In between jobs, Magdalena remained involved with Chicago politics, a topic I will return to at the end of this chapter.

### Cultural Agents

Educated and professional women fluent in both languages, naturally advocate bilingualism, seeing it as a resource for their children. English was essential for economic and social upward mobility in the United States while Spanish remained a cultural link to Puerto Rico. Myrna, a professional and educated woman, developed her own "household language policy".

I do not allow my daughter to switch back and forth between both languages. If she is speaking in English she must finish in English, the same with Spanish. But, in the house when she speaks to me in English I tell her that I do not understand English to please speak to me in Spanish.

Although she recognized the importance of English she wanted Spanish spoken at home. In fact, Myrna admitted she played

spanish music and recited Spanish poetry at home so that her daughter might learn and appreciate Puerto Rican culture at home. Rosa also felt very strongly about her children maintaining Spanish but also understood that their educational advancement hinged upon their knowledge and command of English.

At home I try to teach them and maintain Spanish. In fact, to the little one I buy books and spend time with him teaching him how to read and write in Spanish. We also pay at school so that they can have Spanish lessons. But, when it time to do the homework we try to communicate in English. Doing that has even helped me polish my English.

Vilma, a middle class migrant, did not have children, but strongly believed in teaching children the language and culture. Others like Marisa, who married an African American, talked about how difficult it was for her and her son to continue to communicate in Spanish.

When I'm alone with my son we speak in Spanish, but when my husband is present we try to speak in English because he does not speak a word of Spanish.

Yolanda, however, has had a different strategy. She felt very strongly about her children being able to use English correctly. In fact, she and her husband decided that while the children were growing up they would learn one language,

[M]y oldest daughter understands Spanish, but she does not speak it. [Why I asked?] Because we decided that we wanted her to learn to speak proper English and later on she will learn Spanish. Because it is not important that she speaks it, but that she understands it and respects it. Nuyoricans and Chicago-Ricans don't speak Spanish very good Spanish nor English. In fact, most of what they know are bad words. They just switch back and forth.



Yolanda is referring to a very important and controversial issue within the Puerto Rican community over "code switching", using Spanish and English interchangeably. Island born Puerto Ricans have attacked this Nuyorican<sup>3</sup> form of expression because, they claim, it leads to a loss of traditional values and language (Safa, 1988).

The issue here is generational differences in terms of ethnic awareness. First generation Puerto Ricans (migrants) tend to take their ethnic identity for granted and subscribe to traditional values such as religion, language, and family life. Second-generation Puerto Ricans do not see their ethnic identity that way. For them Puerto Rico is no longer a refuge and their identity is one that has developed in the context of the Puerto Rican community in the United States. The circulatory nature of Puerto Rican migration may blur the distinction between the island and mainland communities but, with the passing of generations it is clear that second-generation Puerto Ricans have forged a unique identity. In New York City this identity has been labelled: "Nuyorican". The Nuyorican subculture borrows heavily from African Americans in both language and cultural patterns. For second-generation Puerto Ricans the island remains a source of reference and collective identity, but they must forge a new cultural identity based on life in the United States.

When Angelica married a Chicago-raised Puerto Rican she complained about this identity issue and the added complexity

it gave to migration and adjustment. For Angelica it was a serious enough issue that it contributed to her marital problems.

He had been raised in a typical Puerto Rican household but since his neighborhood was black he ended up picking up black culture and mannerisms. I was expecting him to act Puerto Rican. He believed that he was more Puerto Rican than Albizu Campos<sup>4</sup>, but he was not. He was not moved by the music, or the poetry.

Magdalena recognized that as an Island born Puerto Rican she had internalized all the prejudices that existed toward mainland born Puerto Ricans. In fact, that was one the issues she had to resolved prior to moving to Chicago. Rosa, for instance, understood the identity problems young Chicago raised Puerto Ricans faced, but still implicit in her statement is an negative assumption about their values.

Second generation Puerto Ricans born and raised here, do not understand what it means to be Puerto Rican because their culture is very different from ours. Here they have a double culture. They are two races and they do not know who they are. Their behavior is so different when compared to the youth in the Island. In Puerto Rico, young people are interested in staying in school, whereas here, there is so much poverty and drug abuse. They drop out of school. Our values are very different.

Rosa understood the identity problem but did not see the two issues related.

Ginorio (1987) found that place of birth and language dominance-both of which are associated with residence outside the Island-were factors that entered into social distance judgments of Puerto Ricans toward other Puerto Ricans. Ginorio (1987) adds that while speaking Spanish was not a significant

component of the self identity of the respondents, it became significant when they judge their social environment. In other words, other Spanish dominant speakers were seen as more similar than either bilingual English speakers and Spanish speakers with an American accent. This was more evident when judging New York-born Puerto Ricans who were seen as more dissimilar from the self than Americans living in the Island.

### Marital Problems

The problems of younger educated women often parallel those of working class migrants. Angelica's first husband was not Puerto Rican but she still encountered problems. She met him one summer in Puerto Rico where she had gone to take some graduate courses at the University of Puerto Rico. Actually, in reality she had returned to find an old boyfriend. But, much to Angelica's surprise, she found out he was getting married. While in Puerto Rico she met a foreign student who was writing his dissertation about Puerto Rico. When she returned to Chicago they corresponded and he relocated to Chicago to be with her.

I got married, but I really did not have to get married, I did it more out of convention so that the family would be satisfied... I was not in love with him, I fell in love after marrying him.... In retrospect that was the best thing.

Her husband, half Arab and half Malay, was not an American citizen and was using her to get U.S. citizenship. After they married he filed for permanent residency. Before his status

was settled, Angelica became pregnant. But, then their lawyer called to announce the arrival of a letter from a woman who claimed to be her husband's wife in Indonesia.

The woman claimed she had lost communication with her husband since November... My marriage was nullified. He wanted to explain but I did not want to listen. I was so mad. I told my family I was not going to marry him again that I did not care what happened to him. But they kept pressuring me to remarried because of the child and because otherwise they would expelled him from the country. I was pregnant but I did not want to have his baby. If it would have been in the first months I would have aborted it. I was so mad. I remarried him just until they processed his paperwork. He thought that I was going to forget and forgive him. I had a baby boy and shortly after I kicked him out of the house.

She continued working as a teacher and at work she met Raul.

I really don't know why I married him because I had serious misgivings about him. Maybe it was because I was alone or because I recognized that my son needed a father. In spite that he was 11 years younger than me I married him anyway.

As I mentioned before, Angelica helped her husband, Raul, finish his law degree postponing her own legal education. After some eight years they separated. Angelica attributed their marital problems to class and racial differences. He had also been unfaithful to her when they got involved with community politics.

[H]e had been raised in a very precarious environment. He had been born in Santurce and came here when he was one year old. He was raised between Harrison and Western close to a black area and in a neighborhood that was very poor. He experienced the kind of poverty Puerto Rican experience. And something that bothered me is that he responded more to Afro-American culture.

Also I had to take care of his mother. Pedro did not want anyone else to take care of our baby daughter but his mother. He expected me to do everything in the house. Then we got involved in politics. The campaigning

started. He was unfaithful with a woman from the campaign trail.

Angelica's problems with her husband stemmed from the different cultural environments in which they had been raised and from their class differences. Angelica and Raul are now divorced. She still works for her ex-husband, however, as a part-time legal clerk. She has not remarried. Amanda also had problems with her American husband but she was reluctant to talk about these issues in the interview.

### Community Activism

An issue that always came up during the interviews with educated women was career related or community related activism. There were three areas where educated women concentrated their social activist efforts: career related, the Island political status, and local political issues.

Brunilda remembered that prior to her involvement with local city politics she had been involved with a local chapter of a career related organization. This group met regularly to discuss issues of concern to professional women such as educational goals and other problems.

The "status issue" concerns the relationship of Puerto Rico to the United states. Was it to become the fifty-first state? Or was it to be eventually an independent country? Or as recent opinion polls in Puerto Rico seem to indicate-was it to remain a Commonwealth? These, of course, were of importance on the island and many of the political parties there were

formed around the answer to the status question. Ironically, that issue was even more intense to many Puerto Ricans in Chicago. Although they had migrated to America, many Chicago Puerto Ricans remained vitally interested in the "status issue". In fact, several Puerto Rican women had even gone to prison because of their involvement with the more radical wings of the Independence Movement. Less dramatic and volatile were some of the people I interviewed. For instance, Ines moved from Kansas to work for a local organization that advocated independence. Vilma, also saw, that

within the more organized political community there is the Socialist Party that have a lengthier history in Chicago closely linked to the Socialist party in Puerto Rico. And last, there are a group of people who have created a series of alternative institutions within the community because we can no longer continue to fight for our independence in so far as we remain economically dependent.

Other educated women concentrated their efforts in less grandiose and more local issues. In keeping with a long standing immigrant tradition in Chicago, as the Puerto Rican community matured electoral politics became a way to make their presence felt in the city (Padilla, 1987).

The first time a Puerto Rican attempted to enter city politics was in 1975 when three barrio candidates challenged incumbents backed by the democratic machine for aldermanic seats in the 31th, 46th, and 26th Wards. They failed but such attempts helped pave the way for others to get involved. Padilla argues that one possible explanation for their failure lies in the inconsistency between the Puerto Rican population

and the number of registered voters. For instance, in the 31st ward, while 76 percent of the population were Spanish-speaking, only 33 percent were registered voters. Another important issue was the gerrymandering of the Puerto Rican areas in the city to dilute their vote.

With the ascendancy of Jane Byrne in the late 1970's, Angelica got involved with politics. She remembered that shortly after the birth of her second baby, at family gatherings the issue of politics always came up.

[the local aldermen] was a crook and when they put him in jail his wife took over. She was incompetent as she did not know anything. The machine was trying to get rid of her and in the process they split. My brother was watching everything very closely and one day he came over to the house and started talking about taking advantage of this opportunity to push a Puerto Rican candidate. That's when I entered the picture. I started running against her and when they [the city political machine] saw the movement they put up another candidate. I lost the nomination.

Angelica put up a strong challenge, but lost to a probation officer and precinct captain. She also lost something a little bit more important than her campaign: her marriage. Apparently, her husband, while campaigning got involved with another woman.

Ironically, in the early 1980's, the results from the U.S. Census of Population gave Puerto Ricans, along with Mexicans and Blacks, the opportunity to file class action suits against the City of Chicago for political representation. The suit was successful and two Puerto Rican wards were created.<sup>5</sup> In the mid 1980's, a Puerto Rican raised in

Chicago become the first member of the community to be elected to the city council.

Magdalena's involvement with city politics was due to her community involvement. She had helped, a local man, get elected as President of the Puerto Rican Parade Committee. After that she became campaign manager for Miguel Del Valle's nomination for state legislature. As Magdalena described her political involvement she was also describing a political movement within the community which eventually lead to the election of two Puerto Ricans to the city council. In Magdalena's words,

we are a group of progressive Puerto Rican men and women, who supported Harold Washington for mayor, and who believe that there is a way of helping our community, of improving our lot and that using legitimate means. Not only in terms of social service, but also in terms of earning a respect for our people and for progressive electoral politics. We saw the Puerto Rican parade as part of that dream. We took things seriously and started organizing a campaign to elect a responsive President of the Puerto Rican Parade Committee. We discussed among other groups and some people agree and others disagree. I, myself, was part of the process because of my idealism it never occurred to me that it could translate into something else. Well, we started pushing this man's candidacy as president of the parade. It suddenly came to us that if we could get him elected, we could get an alderman elected as well, who knows maybe a Senator.

At that time there was a local Puerto Rican running for senator and Magdalena became involved with his campaign. She worked with him until he won the nomination for the Democratic Party as senator for District 5, which is the heart of the Puerto Rican community. At this time, she said she was approached and asked to run for aldermen for District 31st.



Magdalena became the last-minute challenger and even Mayor Harold Washington endorsed her nomination. But she lost. Magdalena reflected about the process and what it meant to her

it was really an interesting situation. First, I'm a woman, a Puerto Rican woman, forty years old and single. In addition, I don't live with my family. I'm not the traditional Puerto Rican woman. But on the other hand, I thought of myself as a role model for our young women.

When it came to the more practical aspects of her campaign and nomination, her reflections and comments are just as insightful.

I recognize it took me a while to make up my mind and as a result I did not have the support mechanisms that are so necessary and that take so long to put in place. But I knew how the political structure worked. I knew it from the inside because I had worked with others. I knew its pros and cons. I started trying to establish a network of support. Because it seems to me that when there are women involved, and especially Puerto Rican women, we need to develop a system of support that is different...

There is a process that we need to undergo in order for these things to take place. Puerto Rican women need to become aware, need to become more accepting and above all we need to realize that it is possible. Puerto Rican men do not have to go through this process. That process is already institutionalized for Puerto Rican men. When men get involved in any kind of activities, resources start to appear from everywhere.

Magdalena was trying to articulate the underlying sexism in American society in general, and the Puerto Rican community in particular, which prevents women from organizing and becoming part of the political process. Aurea best described this process.

Even though I have worked very hard on a number of issues whenever they are going to elect or pick a representative they always chose men even though they may have worked less.

since this interview was conducted Magdalena has not re-entered politics. But, other Puerto Rican women have run for elective politics. One Puerto Rican ran for Cook County Clerk in 1988 but lost. That same year, a second-generation Chicago raised Puerto Rican woman was appointed to a high administrative city job and was later elected to that position.

Brunilda's involvement with politics came through her involvement with Harold Washington's political campaign. Harold Washington's campaign and election became a very important event which helped Puerto Ricans gain a political status within city politics. He was also instrumental in nominating Puerto Ricans to positions of power within the city. Eventually, when he won the election and became mayor Brunilda started working for the city. That is when she realized that politics was not for her and decided to go back to school and finish her doctorate.

In the literature on Puerto Rican migration to the United States, there is very little with which to compare the experiences of these educated migrants in the process of settlement and adaptation. In terms of community activism, Sanchez-Korrol (1986) found that while the majority of the female migrants to New York City were working class, some skilled, bilingual, and educated women were part of this early movement. They were just a handful of women who used the recognition they had achieved in the Island to initiate activities and help in the process of community development.

### Conclusion

In this chapter I have described the work and family experiences of educated Puerto Rican women migrants in Chicago. On one hand, the "human capital" they brought from Puerto Rico, or from other mainland communities, afforded them options and choices not available to working class women. Consequently, the whole process of adaptation for them became qualitatively different from working class women. Their experiences were not as difficult since many had command of the English language and had been exposed to American culture through visits, as in Myrna's case, or because they had lived in other parts of the United States prior to coming to Chicago. Educated women did not need to live in the community to feel connected. Amanda by virtue of her career always felt a part of the community even though she did not live in it. For others living in the community served a business or political purpose as in the case of Myrna and Angelica.

Nevertheless, moving to Chicago was a life changing event. Many came as single women and went on to build their own families. Their choice of partner reflected their movement within other networks of people, other than the Puerto Rican community. Their work and family arrangements defies easy categorization. They used a variety of strategies to deal with the exigencies of work and family. On the other hand, these educated women had much in common with those in the working classes. The memories of the island were just as vivid and alluring. They too had been acculturated by the values and culture of the Island. In America, they were not entirely

protected from the prejudices and biases from the predominant culture. Their education and language facility gave them greater and easier access to some jobs and living areas. Nonetheless, they were just as much a migrant as the working class women. Such a common heritage and migratory experience could only be marginally impacted upon by education.

NOTES

1. The interview was conducted in Spanish and here she used the English term.
2. Fictitious name I gave to her second husband.
3. Refers to New York born Puerto Ricans.
4. Pedro Albizu Campos was the father of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Movement.
5. According to Fremon (1988:209), Humboldt Park and five surrounding precincts were moved to the 26th Ward. One southern precinct was transferred to the 27th Ward and four went to the 37th Ward. Two western precincts also went to the 27th Ward. The 31st gained six northern precincts which had been part of the 33 Ward and three others which previously belonged to the 35th (Fremon, 1988:209).

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

I began this study with a series of simple and straight forward questions. I wanted to know what compelled women to leave the island of Puerto Rico and come to Chicago, and how they managed the move. I also wanted to know how they managed to recreate and maintain family life once in Chicago? Has their work conflicted with domestic responsibilities? Central to these questions was my desire to understand how gender and class shaped the migration process of Puerto Ricans to the United States, and in particular to Chicago. In placing women at the center of my analysis a complex story unraveled before me. The stories Puerto Rican women told of their migration to Chicago revealed the personal side of Puerto Rico's transformation from a predominantly agricultural to an industrial society.

In the first part of this chapter I summarize the major empirical findings of this research organized around a series of major themes present throughout this study. I also attempt to place the experiences of Puerto Rican women as migrants in a larger comparative framework with other immigrant women. Then, I move on to explore the theoretical issues this study has raised in the field of migration studies. I end the

chapter with a discussion of the limitations of the empirical findings and suggestions for further research.

### Summary of Findings

The oral-histories collected for this research have only begun to show how in the context of a changing political economy migration emerged as a strategy for Puerto Ricans across class backgrounds. The interviews also show how over the years, Puerto Rican migration to Chicago has become a revolving door phenomenon with back and forth movement between Chicago, the island and other mainland communities. Initially, migration was a strategy working class families used to deal with shrinking economic opportunities for the men in the family. But, eventually as my interviews show, educated men and women joined working class Puerto Ricans in the migration process. Yet, the circumstances and conditions of their migration varied by class and gender.

### Gender, Class, and Migration

In the 1950's, given the changing political economy in the Island, working class and poor Puerto Ricans ventured to Chicago and other parts of the United States in search of work. It is important to recognize that the first group of Puerto Rican women that arrived in Chicago came to work as contracted domestic workers. Puerto Rican domestic workers were hired as cooks, nursemaids, clothes washers thereby

relieving middle class women of the dirtier and heavier aspects of domestic work. This illustrates what Glenn (1992) has called the racial division of reproductive labor. It is no coincidence that historically women of color have been assigned a distinct place in the organization of reproductive labor. Glenn (1992) argues that the racial division of reproductive work mirrored the racial hierarchy prevalent in a particular region of the country. In the South, African American women constituted the main and almost exclusive servant cast, whereas in the southwest, with predominantly Mexican populations, it was Chicanas. In Chicago, Puerto Rican women joined Black women in the racial division of reproductive work.

Ideologically this racial division of reproductive work defines women of color as particularly suited for this kind of work. Arguments ranged from viewing Black and Mexican women as incapable of governing their own lives--thus, white employment became an act of benevolence--to describing Asian women as naturally suited for domestic work (Glenn, 1992:14). This racial ideology existed toward Puerto Rican migrants as indicated by the letter from an American employer in Philadelphia when he described Rosita and her husband as a "definite menace to society" and commented that "Puerto Rican domestics should not be turned loose in the country without definite supervision".

Gender relations within the family were a major factor



shaping the migration of working class women to Chicago. For the most part, the working class women that came to Chicago in the 1950's and early 1960's moved as family groups with husbands moving first, followed by wife and children. Some informants reported that they were working and their husbands were unemployed when they moved to Chicago. This suggests that their gender roles as wives and mothers took precedence over their roles as wage earners. Others, like Asuncion and Victoria, struggled over the decision to come, but they also succumbed to family demands, returning to Chicago to reunite their families.

In contrast, the educated married women of this study were less encumbered by gender relations of authority in the process of migration. In fact, the way educated women talked about the move was qualitatively different from their working class counterparts. Working class married women talked about it as something they were resigned to do while educated migrants shared in the decision making. Educated married women were also less dependent on other family members to make the move. The migration of married educated women is suggestive of other ways in which gender relations shape the migration process in that in at least one case the roles reversed and a man followed his wife to Chicago.

Comparing the experiences of single migrants by class background offers the most marked ways in which gender and class shaped the migration process. Single working class

women, like married women, also talked about moving in a rigidly gendered way as some came because some relative needed care. Even when the migration was not gender related, as in Lupe's case, the move was most likely to take place under the careful watch of a male family member. Educated single migrants were less encumbered by those kinds of patriarchal constraints, or perhaps were in a better position to bargain with patriarchy.

Lastly, divorced, widowed, and single women with children were also less encumbered by gender relations of authority. They had to rely on the help of family members to make the move, however, educated divorced women seemed to fare better when compared to their working class counterparts. Educated divorced women could transfer their education and skills more quickly, and to their immediate benefit. There were other factors, however, such as the age of the children, availability of child care, and work related issues that added complexity to the migration process of divorced women.

The underlying force explaining the migration of Puerto Ricans across class backgrounds has been primarily economic. In other words, both working and educated women and their families came to Chicago attracted by job opportunities. However, accounts by these respondents suggest that gender related reasons have also pushed women to move. Among the gender related reasons women gave for migration were: marital problems, unexpected pregnancy, running away from family

responsibilities and relationships. As I argued in Chapter I, to think of migration as relating only to economic reasons is limiting and narrow. Evidence from the interviews also suggest that there is a reproductive dimension to the migration process. It can be observed first, in the migration of the domestic contract workers; and, as working class married women brought over other women relatives to do the housework and child care (reproductive work) which would free them to work outside the home.

Students of Puerto Rican migration have investigated thoroughly the effects of Operation Bootstrap on the working class and the findings in this study coincide with their accounts. But, to learn that educated Puerto Rican women have become involved in the migration process is important because it begins to suggest the long-lasting effects of the development program on other sectors of Puerto Rican society. I recognize, however, that the number of educated migrants I interviewed is relatively small and would not allow me to establish a pattern of statistical significance. Nevertheless, it raises a number of empirical questions. To what extent is the migration of educated and professional women a relatively new phenomenon?

Another finding of importance to students of Puerto Rican migration is how second-generation Puerto Rican women have also used migration as a strategy for dealing with personal and economic problems. This indicates, perhaps, a generational

dimension to the migration process in a community where migration has become a way of life. This, contributes to a emerging body of literature that attempts to understand the changing face of labor migration from Puerto Rico to the United States.

The migration of Puerto Rican women to Chicago needs to be seen within a larger context of women's participation in migratory movements. Like other immigrant women, Puerto Rican women have always been directly or indirectly involved in the migration process. The problem is that the women's side of the story remains largely untold. The similarities in the migration process with other immigrant women, in particular Mexican women, are striking.

Family stage migration has been a strategy used by European, Latino, and Asian immigrants alike at different points in time. But, given the paucity of empirical research and the theoretical orientation of the field very little is known of the way gender relations shapes this type of migration. Recently, however, a new wave of feminist research has looked at precisely at how gender, race, and class issues shaped the migration process. Hondagneu-Sotelo's (1992) research, for instance, suggest how patriarchal gender relations helped organize the migration process of Mexican immigrants. As I found among working Puerto Rican families, for Mexican immigrants men decided unilaterally to migrate with only token regard to their wife's concern. Women were not

active in the decision making and some vehemently opposed their husband's migration. Some were very young, recently married, and were not accustomed to disagreeing with or even questioning their husband's opinion. For those who had migrated prior to 1965, the family separation lasted longer because of immigration laws. These long separations between husband and wives diminished the hegemony of the husband's authority and increased women's autonomy and influence in the family (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992:400). Mexican men in the United States had to learn how to cook, clean, and other household chores. When husband and wives reunited a more egalitarian division of labor emerged. The families that had migrated after 1965 did not experience such long separation periods thus, when reunited an orthodox gender division of labor was reinstated. Hondagneu-Sotelo's (1992:411) research suggest that not only is migration shaped by gender relations, but perhaps more importantly, the migration experienced by those who pursue family stage migration forges new gender relations. In other words, "migration is both gendered and gendering".

In contrast to Mexicans, Puerto Ricans do not have to face immigration and naturalization requirements when they enter the United States. Such ease of movement does not allow for the kind of spouse separation that in the Mexican case brought about changes in gender relations. On the contrary, for Puerto Ricans patriarchal gender relations tended to dominate the migration process. This was seen more clearly in

the migration of working class married and single women when they moved to take on the household chores and other types of housework. A question worth investigating is to what extent gender relations change upon settlement when the same conditions are reproduced in a Puerto Rican marriage-i.e., long spouse separation due to migration-?

### Family, Work, and Community

Once in Chicago, Puerto Rican women like other immigrant women were responsible for recreating and maintaining family life. Puerto Rican women across class backgrounds tried to provide as much continuity in the process of forming and recreating family life. But, important class differences began to emerge as women juggled family and work responsibilities and became involved in community development.

Women, in particular, confronted a basic duality in relation to the family. On one hand, families provided economic and emotional support. The family was the only area where people were free to be themselves, and where people came for affection and love. But, the family was also an institution that had historically oppressed women. When individuals and families confronted economic deprivation, legal discrimination, and other threats to their survival, conflict within the context of the family was muted by the pressure of the family to unite against assaults from the outside. The tendency was to focus on the family as a site of

resistance yet forgetting how certain family arrangements can be oppressive to women. Often misunderstood by scholars is seeing that women's reproductive work on behalf of the family rather than as work that primarily benefits men (Glenn, 1987:192).

When analyzing the living arrangements of working class Puerto Rican families I found some evidence of this problem. As working class families resisted housing discrimination by living with other relatives, this arrangement became an oppressive and exploitative for women. Rita, Victoria, and Agnes all found themselves living with other relatives and doing chores for them as if they were live-in-maids. In the process of adapting to their new family arrangements, working class women developed different strategies to individually resist such situations. Some complied but others women confronted their husbands, pressuring them to do something about their living arrangements. These strategies took place in a framework that did not challenge the traditional patriarchal structure of the family. A question open for empirical investigation is to what extent do these problems reproduced themselves when these families became providers of living arrangements for other relatives?

Educated migrants and their families did not face such housing problems when they arrived in the city. Their education and other class resources afforded them options not available to working class families at the time they arrived in the

city. They bought houses, rented apartments, and did not need to rely on other relatives to settle in the city.

As women, however, both educated and working class migrants faced similar problems juggling family and work responsibilities. The strategies they used to resolve these problems differed by class. Working class husbands resisted the idea of women working outside the home, although some relented temporarily given the family's economic situation. Furthermore, women's attitudes about work outside the home reflected traditional Puerto Rican values about women's gender roles. Working class women saw themselves in keeping with Puerto Rican culture as primarily "mujeres de la casa". But, many found themselves working, albeit temporarily, given the family's economic situation. Here, families accommodated to the wives temporary employment but again in a way that did not challenge the traditional patriarchal structure in the family. Wives were still responsible for cooking, cleaning, and childcare. Given this situation, working class married women developed strategies to accommodate their roles as working wives.

The area of childcare best reflects the resourcefulness of Puerto Rican women migrants in developing accommodating strategies. Some women left their children behind in Puerto Rico, others brought relatives from Puerto Rico to help them, and others turned to older daughters as helpers. Others became involved in a cycle of child care similar to the one developed



by Puerto Rican women migrants in New York City. It started with placing children in the care of another woman in the neighborhood or building while she worked. Then, when a woman stopped working outside the home she then becomes a childcare provider for other women. Eventually, in old age some women became child care providers for their own children's children.

Kibria (1992) studied Vietnamese refugee women in Philadelphia and found similar accommodating strategies but at a collective level organized around women-centered groups. She found that Vietnamese women formed groups around household, family and neighborhood ties to exchange food and materials. These women-centered groups were also used for coping with male authority by supporting the struggles of individual women in family disputes. The women's groups derived influence from their ability to interpret situations, define who was right and wrong, and imposing their interpretations through gossip. But, they were careful not to disturb the traditional boundaries of family and gender relations. Vietnamese women remained attached to the old male-dominant family system that called for female deference and loyalty because, according to Kibria (1990:20), "it offered them economic protection and allow them to continue their officially sanctioned authority over the younger generation". Lamphere (1987) also found similar patterns among Portuguese and Colombian immigrants in Rhode Island.

Working class Puerto Rican women adapted to life in

Chicago in a way that did not disturb traditional family arrangements, yet like Vietnamese women, they developed strategies to resist some family arrangements. Rita's experiences suggest how women sought to change her husband's view about work outside the home. Also, when confronted with her husband's reluctance to buy a house she went off and created a network of people that helped her accomplish her goal. Others reported to have stopped working for wages, but their continued contributions to their roles as mothers, especially in the absence of fathers, continued to give them influence and power within the family structure. In addition, some women remained active in income generating activities such as working in the family business.

Perhaps, Kibria's argument applies here as well, in that to openly challenge the Puerto Rican patriarchal system was not necessary since they also had a stake in the authority system. Respect and authority in Puerto Rican culture is accorded first to the husband-father, then to the wife-mother. This can be seen when husbands neglected their responsibilities as fathers, as Rita's case suggest, then women took charge of the household providing for their children and family.

But, not all were able to "bargain with patriarchy" like Rita. Others when their husbands abandoned them found themselves "a husband away from poverty". For them, welfare became a strategy to deal with temporary loss of their husbands until

they were able to further their education and careers. This raises a number of questions given the sudden emergence of female headed-households among Puerto Ricans migrants in the United States. How is migration involved in the high incidence of Puerto Rican families headed by a woman and living below the poverty level? To what extent is this strategy of relying on welfare widespread among Puerto Rican women? What other strategies do female headed families use in dealing with poverty? To what extent do welfare policies in our state discourage labor force participation?

Educated migrants, on the other hand, felt differently about work and family obligations. For the most part, although some struggled over their roles as mothers and wives, many rejected traditional ideologies about women's roles and saw no conflict in doing both. Educated migrants talked about how their husbands supported them and how even when husbands resisted they negotiated the work and family responsibilities. In terms of childcare, their options ranged from staying home full time until they were ready to return to work, hire help, postponing having children altogether, to organizing their schedule around their children's schooling.

But, educated migrants were not entirely protected from the prejudices and biases embedded in Puerto Rican culture and the dominant society. Their education and language facilitated access to jobs and living areas, but in the area of community activism they faced both racism and sexism. Within the Puerto

Rican community, women became involved in community organizations but were relegated to "foot soldiers" and rarely assigned to leadership positions. As Magdalena's experience suggest, breaking ground in politics entailed facing both a traditional Puerto Rican ideology which sees women as home-bound, and a dominant racial ideology that accorded Puerto Ricans to the bottom of the racial hierarchy.

Working class Puerto Rican migrants, by contrast, became involved in community activities that did not challenged the traditional balance within the family structure. In fact, their community involvement in church related activities and cultural events can be seen as an extension of their roles within the family structure. In general, the evidence from these accounts contrasts with the prevailing view of Puerto Rican women as passive and unimportant to the building of Puerto Rican culture and community in Chicago.

### Identity, Class, and Gender

It was evident from my informants accounts that maintaining a Puerto Rican identity added another dimension to the complexity of adaptation in Chicago. In fact, one of my informants captured best this identity issue: "we don't need to be Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico, we become Puerto Ricans when we come to this country". Once again, the citizenship issue places Puerto Ricans in a unique position as they move to the United States. Strictly speaking, Puerto Ricans are not

"immigrants" entering an alien nation. Assuming there is an analytical distinction between "immigration" and "migration", the movement of Puerto Ricans, like that of African Americans, is a migration process. Puerto Ricans are migrants entering a society they have been somewhat familiar with for at least the last hundred years. In spite of Puerto Rican's familiarity with the United States, when entering the United States, we feel like "immigrants" entering an alien society as language and cultural values set Puerto Ricans apart from the rest of the population.

The process of recreating and maintaining a Puerto Rican identity varied a great deal within the Puerto Rican community. Time of migration, class, generational differences, and reception factors are important issues shaping the development of a Puerto Rican identity. Both working class and educated women used the Spanish language as an anchor to their identities and a link to Puerto Rico. But, their class background determined the strategies they used to maintain it. Educated women advocated bilingualism seeing it as a resource for themselves and their children and as a vehicle to occupational mobility. Even Yolanda who preferred her children learn English first, never ruled out the importance of learning Spanish. Educated women arrived at a time in the community in which most of the battles about bilingualism had been fought and won. They, in essence, benefitted from the work of earlier migrants as they fought to make the school system more

responsive to their needs.

For working class women, on the other hand, Spanish was the main means of communication with their families since many came with little knowledge of English. Some working class women became more attached to the language mainly because they rarely moved beyond the confines of their tight communities. Even when some of them reported to have worked as factory workers, the language barrier was not a problem given that relatives and friends always helped with translations. When their children started going to school and began confronting them about learning English, they held on to Spanish because of the possibility of returning to the Island. These interviews hinted about the possibilities of generational conflicts between parents and children. Second-generation Puerto Rican women, in particular, had the most to offer in this area since many of them struggled a great deal with their identities.

Finally, these interviews also suggest the importance of fiestas and cultural events as collective manifestations by which Puerto Ricans in general, and Puerto Rican women in particular, reconstruct their identity in a city as racially and ethnically diverse as Chicago. It is clear, however, that more research is needed to further understand other ways in which class and gender might affect the process of maintaining and recreating one's ethnic identity.

Identity issues in the Puerto Rican community were always constructed around the concept of cultural difference and

maintaining a cultural identity was grounded in Puerto Rican customs and values. But, when looking at how Puerto Ricans are perceived when they migrate to Chicago it suggests other dynamics. Specifically, the racial heterogeneity of Puerto Ricans creates confusion in the United States racial classification system.

Puerto Ricans present an enigma to the United States racial classification system because they can be both an "ethnic group" and a "racial group" (Rodriguez, 1989). In the United States, the racial classification is bimodal, one is either white or black and one's racial identification, to a large extent, determines cultural identification. In other words, Americans are first white or black, then Italian, Irish, and West Indian. The history of the Island yielded a different racial classification system and a unique set of social attitudes about race. As Rodriguez (1989:52) describes it, in Puerto Rico racial classification is subordinate to cultural identification. Thus, Puerto Ricans are first Puerto Ricans, then "blanco/a" (white), moreno/a (dark) and so on. In Puerto Rico's racial classification system as well as in other parts of Latin America, racial categories are based on color, class, social features, and texture of hair.<sup>1</sup> Puerto Rican society is culturally homogeneous and racially integrated. Mixed marriages are not taboo. So, when the "rainbow people"-as Puerto Ricans have been called-enter the United States the imposition on Puerto Ricans of the U.S. racial

order meant the dominance of racial over cultural identification (Rodriguez, 1989). This raises a number of important questions concerning the racial/ethnic identity of Puerto Ricans. Do dark and lighter Puerto Ricans differ in their racial/ethnic identification once they migrate to the United States? Are there any class differences? To what extent, do second-generation Puerto Ricans who are influenced by development in the African-American community reconstruct their identity integrating symbols and values of both communities?

### Gender and Migration: A Missing Link

Theoretically, this study aimed to contribute to migration theory by calling attention to the many ways in which gender can shape the migration process. As I mentioned in the Introduction, students of population movements have the tendency to rely on individual or structural explanations. For the most part, studies continue to focus on male immigrants, paying attention to immigrant women only when they enter the labor force. Feminist helped to bring women into visibility, but the problem remain that most studies take the additive approach and have yet to raise the questions necessary to transform the theoretical foundations of the field.

Here, I argue that the issue of gender must be taken seriously in theorizing about migration. To look at how gender is involved in the migration process is to go beyond the



question of whether men and women migrate. As Acker (1992) points out, gender is a process, not a characteristic of persons, although it does not exclude the assignment of persons to gender categories. Gender is relational and interactive, it does not exist in a set of relations that are distinct from other relations, such as those of class and race.

Gender shaped the migration process of Puerto Ricans to Chicago in a number of ways. Gender related issues pushed some women to migrate. Others found themselves moving in gendered ways, be that following a husband, brother, or other family members. Gender relations within the family also provided another framework for the migration process. Moving in gendered ways meant carrying the culturally dictated roles of men and women's behavior according to Puerto Rican culture. Some women resisted, while others negotiate with patriarchy.

Another very important dimension within the concept of gender is the productive and reproductive differentiation. Here lies the most important contribution of this study to migration theory. Migration studies have failed to acknowledge that there is a reproductive dimension to migration. Puerto Rican women who followed their husbands to Chicago and who for the most part remain home to care for the children should also be categorized as labor migrants as they came to do the reproductive work which supported their husbands and families. Once in Chicago, Puerto Rican women confronted the basic

duality of being responsible for the reproductive work which takes place at home and productive work outside the home with profound consequences for the gender division of labor within the household. The domestic workers represents another example of this reproductive dimension of migration. The working class Puerto Rican women who were brought to Chicago by other women to do the reproductive work that would free them to work outside the home also suggest another dimension to the reproductive dimension of migration. In general, much work lies ahead to fully grasp how gender shapes the migration process and how migration can change gender relations within a group.

### Limitations

When I first undertook this study my intention was to reconstruct from the women's point of view the process of migration and adaptation to a new environment. In keeping with my feminist orientation, I was not interested in prediction, nor in generalizations to the entire female Puerto Rican population. I wanted to adequately reconstruct the process of migration from the interviews in a way that the women would recognize, but also in a way that would reveal larger processes or underlying assumptions that they may not recognize themselves. This entailed documenting, describing, and analyzing each women's interview on its own while also looking for patterns across all interviews. I recognize that

a major limitation in this kind of work is the possibility that the women I interviewed had already made sense of their lives in light of the present. That, perhaps, what they shared with me was already a reconstruction. There is also the possibility that what each women wanted me to know about herself and her experiences influenced what she said and how she organized her narrative. Her interpretation and analysis of me as a young professional who according to some informants "did not look Puerto Rican" may also affected what they said and how they said it.

Conducting the interviews in Spanish became a major limitation both in terms of analysis and interpretation. While I could examine what they said about moving and adapting to life in Chicago, analyzing how they said it became a next to impossible task. Thought processes vary a great deal not only by class but also by language, be that English or Spanish. Translating the women's narrative was also a major problem because working class women, in particular, used slang Spanish and capturing such language nuances is very difficult even for expert translators.

Lastly, there was one major difficulty embedded in the methodological assumptions of this study. Doing feminist research entails more than just making women visible and telling their stories from their point of view. Developing a sociology for women entails a political commitment to ending women's oppression for both the researcher and the researched.

In those interviews with women who were already changing both their life circumstances and their understanding of their lives, I recognized the potential of this research to contribute toward such consciousness raising. But, the emancipatory potential could hardly be attained in most of the interviews. Limitations varied from the work, and financial independence to the cultural boundaries that sometimes women were afraid or did not want to cross. Therein lies a major dilemma for feminist research. As Acker, Barry, and Esseveld (1991:150) point out, "should we do research that is not consciousness raising for the participants? Is such research an oppressive process that of necessity exploits the subject?". The answer to these and many other related methodological questions lies in the on-going project of feminist investigation and dialogue about the research process.

There is no doubt in my mind that this study has raised more questions than what I could possibly answer and that more research is needed to corroborate and complement the findings I have presented here.

### Suggestions for Further Research

This study is part of an increasing effort to consider women's experiences from their own viewpoint and to consider the impact of race, class, and gender as they shaped women's lives. Feminist efforts have helped us realize that the

experiences of women are not all the same, now the task is to further explore these differences, in particular, in the study of migration. This study has raised a number of questions to guide future research on Puerto Rican migration to the United States, in general, and women's migratory experience in particular.

In the area of migration, we need to continue to explore other ways in which gender continues to shape the movement of people. We need to explore further how women in different family arrangements negotiate the move from Puerto Rico to the United States. How perhaps older women use their influence and power to promote migration? We need more detailed description and analysis of the networks people build in the process of migration. This study hinted at the possibility that migration may have some important effects on the family structure. For some their marriages failed upon migration. How widespread is this problem? Are there any class differences?

A compelling question considering how migration has become a widespread strategy in the Puerto Rican community is the question of who stays behind? What are the pressures to move to the United States? Furthermore, is the United States the only location Puerto Ricans prefer? Are there other places where Puerto Ricans move? Why? How do their experiences compare? The issue of return migration deserves some consideration as well. It is clear from these interviews that some working class families returned to the Island with the

expressed intent to resettled? Why? What motivated their return to Chicago?

The area of gender relations within the family before and after migration is also a promising area of inquiry with important policy implications. There is very little research on how gender roles have changed in Puerto Rico in the last few decades, specifically across class backgrounds. Most of the working class women I talked to opted to stay home to care for the family and home. What changes if any do gender roles undergo when women stay in the labor force? Do women accommodate their roles as working wives? Or does their financial contributions bring about changes in the family structure?

In this study, I did not address the work experiences of Puerto Rican migrant women. We need to explore beyond what labor force statistics can offer, the working experiences of Puerto Ricans women in the United States across class and racial backgrounds. How has the process of de-industrialization affected Puerto Rican migrants and their families who originally came to the city because of the availability of jobs? Closely related are issues about the development of the Puerto Rican community and the role women have played in the various community struggles.

NOTES

1. In Puerto Rico, there are blancos (whites), indios (dark skinned and straight haired people), morenos (dark skinned but displaying both black and white features), negros (very dark skinned people).

<sup>^</sup>  
and

## **APPENDIX A**



## APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

This appendix elaborates on a series of methodological issues which I raised earlier in the Introduction.

### Political Advocacy and Scholarship

As mentioned earlier, my first group of interviews revolved around a newly organized grass-roots group of latina women in the West side of Chicago. I had met Cecilia, the organizer and founder of the group, at a city-wide conference on Latina women organized by the Latino Institute. Her enthusiasm and passion for the problems and issues confronting latina women in general and Puerto Rican women in particular were very appealing to me as a Puerto Rican and as budding feminist. Without thinking twice, I became involved with the group as a board member. At the time, I thought that I was following in the tradition of other feminist whose political beliefs had played a crucial role both in their choice of research and their own political activism. I did not realize the struggles, doubts, and problems that integrating politics and scholarship could bring to the research project and to me as a sociologist.

On one hand, becoming a board member and working for this organization helped relieved some of the anxiety around the issue of using other Puerto Rican women to forward my own personal agenda and research career. Although I used their resources and my position as a board member to gain access to some women in the community, I rationalized that I was working

for them and was sort of paying back to them by addressing their political movement in scholarly ways. I tried to convince myself that I was succeeding in integrating my political activism and scholarship. But, in retrospect, I realize that by joining Cecilia's group many important repercussions, in both the gathering of the data and eventually my analysis, would occur.

The most pressing problem I confronted was that women in the community saw only my affiliation to the latina organization, and sometimes it prevented them from opening up and sharing with me the more personal aspects of their lives. Others thought that I could provide them with special needs and services. While others just simply saw me with suspicion and as a potential competitor. I learned of a woman who had been in the community for a long time, and at the time of my research headed a not-for-profit children's organization. I called and asked her for an interview. I told her about our work in the community and that I was also writing my thesis about the experiences of Puerto Rican women in Chicago. I asked if I could come to her house so that we could talk. She turned me down adamantly. Given her response I suggested to meet at a local restaurant which she accepted. While conducting the interview she ducked any kind of questions about her personal life in Puerto Rico and Chicago. She was determined to speak only about the more public aspects of her life. She had a lot to share about her community activism but

I also needed to know how she got there and the problems she confronted as a woman and a Puerto Rican. Instead, I got a sort of public/institutional history of her work. In general, her interview was one of the most difficult. On another occasion, a woman thought that I could help her find a wheelchair for her mother. I tried helping her out but the organization could not respond to such a request. I felt so helpless and frustrated. This problem, became serious enough to force me to reconsider my decision of working with this group. Eventually, it worked itself out, however, because since I did not have any economic support to continue my research I had to find a job. Through my job, I then gained access to other families in the community. Also, given the constraints of academic life, I eventually had to give up my work with the group. By the time I started writing this project I had lost contact with them altogether. I know, however, that they have survived the budget crisis facing not-for-profits in Chicago, especially those organizations which helped disadvantaged groups.

Also, a more serious question I confronted is how my public interpretations of the experiences of these women could be of benefit and value to them. Closely related are also issues of confronting the personal contradictions of the scholar-advocate position. I saw myself as collecting the stories of Puerto Rican women to bring their issues and problems to national attention, and at the same time put

forward a critique of sociology. Without a doubt, using Puerto Rican women's stories to critique sociology, even feminist sociology, has come much easier.

### The Dilemma of Translations

As Etter-Lewis (1991:43) argues language is an important force that shapes oral texts and gives meaning to historical events. It is through language that individuals interpret past memories, present experiences and future hopes. Thus, attention to language has become a very important aspect of the feminist method. In this study since most of the interviews were conducted and transcribed in Spanish I would like to explore the dilemmas I faced in doing the translations. The first problem was that working class women often used cultural texts to describe their experiences and that were impossible to translate. Most often finding the equivalent in English proved hopeless. So, I adopted the policy of leaving these statements in the quoted texts followed by a proximate English translation. Another problem I faced concerned whether the translations adequately expressed the feelings and real words of my informants. For these I have to take total responsibility since I did most of the translations myself. Furthermore, any transgressions of the English language are entirely mine, not theirs. Last, there was the problem of code-switching which arose when interviewing second-generation Puerto Rican women. Code-

switching has become a popular form of expression for second-generation Puerto Ricans who find themselves between two language worlds. Here again I faced the problem do I leave this form of expression intact, or do I fit it to English standards? I opted to leave them as such thus presenting another intricacy of the text. But, the most serious problem concerned the analysis of the text itself, an issue which I explored in the limitations of this study in the concluding chapter.

## **APPENDIX B**

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

### A. Respondent's Personal Background:

Name, current address, age, marital status, religion, education, occupation, household members.

### B. Respondent's information about living in Puerto Rico:

Where were you born in Puerto Rico? Did you live there before coming to Chicago? How long? did your family lived close by? if not, where do they lived? Did you work in paid labor while in Puerto Rico? in what?

### C. Respondent's Migration History:

When did you come to Chicago? why did you come to Chicago? How did you get here? What motivated you to leave Puerto Rico? why Chicago? Did you come to Chicago alone? Was you family with you? Were you single? married? what happened when you got to Chicago? what were your plans? Do other members of the family come with you? did your family helped you moved? how?

What did you do when you arrived. Describe the first week. Month. Year.

What did you know about Chicago? did you come directly from Puerto Rico? do you have relatives in the United States? in Chicago? do you know when they came? why? Have you live in other parts of the United States? Where? How long?

### D. Respondent's Arrival in Chicago:

Once in Chicago, where did you live? apartment building? house? was it close to other Puerto Ricans? how did you find it? did you go to church? where there other Puerto Ricans in church? did you go to any other public places? who did you know? who did you meet? where? did you know other Puerto Ricans in Chicago? who? why? how did you communicated with people in Puerto Rico? letters? phone? other family members?

Did you helped other family members or friends come to Chicago? Why?

### E. Community

do you have an idea of how many Puerto Ricans lived in Chicago at the time you arrived? Have did your way of life change? what things have change? Do you go out to any place regularly? Are you a member of any group?

What do you do after work? on weekends? Are you politically active? What kind of activities?

F. Respondent's Work History:

what was your first job here? how did you get it? How long did you work there? what was your second job? third?

what is your current occupation? how long have you worked there? how did you learned about it? what other jobs have you had? for how long? why did you leave it? do you work with other Puerto Ricans? have you always worked?

G. Respondent's Family History:

Does all your family live in the United States? Do they live in Chicago? if so, since when? how do they came? when? why? If yes specify which relatives. Does all your family lives in Chicago? If not, are they still in Puerto Rico? where? have they come to Chicago? if yes, when? why? how long?

Are you still in touch with family/relatives in Puerto Rico?

Do you visit hem regularly? Do you plan to go back? Do you help your family in Puerto Rico? How?

Looking back, what was the most significant moment in your life in Chicago? Do you regret moving here? Do you like it here? what do you miss the most?



## **APPENDIX C**

APPENDIX C: RESPONDENTS PROFILE AT THE TIME OF MIGRATION AND TIME OF INTERVIEW

Pseudonym	Y/M <sup>1</sup>	Age		Marital Status		Education	
		T/M <sup>2</sup>	T/I <sup>3</sup>	T/M <sup>4</sup>	I/T <sup>5</sup>	M/ <sup>6</sup>	I/ <sup>7</sup>
Rosita	1948	20	61	single	married	<H.S	H.S.
Josefa	1949	18	58*	married	widowed	<H.S.<H.S.	
Mildred	1949	03	43	child	married	0	S/C
Tonita	1950	16	55	single	married	H.S.	H.S.
Lucy	1950	25	64	married	married	<H.S.<H.S.	
Cristina	1950	B	40	child	married	0	H.S.
Luz	1951	27	65	married	divorced	<H.S.<H.S.	
Angelica	1951	14	52	single	married	<H.S.<H.S.	
Rita	1951	24	62	married	married	<H.S.<H.S.	
Marylin	1951	B	42	Child	separated	0	H.S.
Socorro	1952	B	38	child	divorced	0	H.S.
Daniela	1952	20*	57*	married	married	<H.S.	H.S.
Haydee	1952	10	47	child	married	<H.S.	H.S.
Luisa	1953	08	44	child	divorced	<H.S.<H.S.	
Alicia	1953	20	56	single	married	<H.S.<H.S.	
Nellie	1953	16	52	married	divorced	<H.S.<H.S.	
Carmen	1953	20	56	single	widowed	<H.S.<H.S.	
Daisy	1954	B	37	child	married	0	<H.S.
Teresa	1954	20	55	married	married	<H.S.<H.S.	
Claudia	1954	B	38	child	married	0	M.A
Isabel	1957	B	43	child	married	0	B.A.
Laura	1959	23	53	married	married	H.S.	H.S.
Asuncion	1959	30*	60	married	married	H.S.	H.S.
Adelaida	1960	07	36	child	married	<H.S.	B.A.
Magda	1962	09	36	child	married	<H.S.	B.A.
Julia	1962	22	49*	single	married	B.A.	B.A.
Iris	1964	27*	52*	divorced	divorced	<H.S.	H.S.
Cecilia	1964	06	31	child	single	<H.S.	H.S.
Alba	1964	12	37*	child	married	<H.S.	B.A.
Letty	1966	12	35	child	married	<H.S.	H.S.
Victoria	1966	18	41	married	married	<H.S.	S.C.
Lupe	1967	18	40	single	married	H.S.	H.S.
Brunilda	1968	20*	41*	married	married	B.A.	Ph.D
Amanda	1969	20*	40*	single	divorced	B.A.	Ph.D
Lisa	1969	20*	40	single	single	B.A.	B.A.
Vicenta	1970	40*	59	separated	divorced	<H.S.<H.S.	
Norma	1970	18	37	child	single	0	Min.
Agnes	1970	19	38	married	divorced	H.S.	H.S.
Aurea	1971	33	51	married	married	B.A.	B.A.
Leida	1972	17	34*	divorced		H.S.	
Magdalena	1975	26	40	single	single	B.A.	B.A.
Yolanda	1979	25	35	single	married	B.A.	B.A.
Sandra	1980	20	29	single	divorced	S/C	S/C
Rosa	1981	26	34	married	married	H.S.	S/C
Ines	1983	23*	29	single	married	B.A.	B.A.
Myrna	1983	36	42	divorced	divorced	M.A.	M.A.

Marisa	1984	34	39	divorced	married	B.A.	M.A.
Vilma	1986	23	26	single	married	M.A.	M.A.
Ada	1989	60*	60*	*	*	H.S.	H.S.
Raquel		** <sup>8</sup>	31	n/a	single		J.D.
Rosie		**	30	n/a	single		M.A.

1. Indicates year of migration.
2. Indicates age at the time of migration and when accompanied by the following symbol "\*" it indicates estimated age.
3. Indicates age at the time of the interview and when accompanied by the following symbol "\*" it indicates estimated age.
4. Indicates marital status at the time of migration. When the word child appears it indicates the respondent was a child or newborn at the time of migration.
5. Indicates marital status at the time of the interview. When the following symbol "\*" appears, it indicates missing information.
6. Indicates education at the time of migration. When "<" appears it means the respondent had less than a high school degree. For babies or newborns I have coded "0" education.
7. Indicates education at the time of the interview. When the letter "S/C" appears it indicates some college. Again, H.S. means a high school degree and "<" means less than a high school degree.
8. These two respondents were born in Chicago.

## **APPENDIX D**

**APPENDIX D: TOWNS AND CITIES WHERE MIGRATION ORIGINATED IN  
PUERTO RICO.**

<u>Town/City</u>	<u>Repts</u>	<u>Town/City</u>	<u>Repts</u>
San Juan	12	Cayey	1
Ponce	7	Cidra	1
Arecibo	4	Ciales	1
San Lorenzo	4	Guaynabo	1
Lares	3	Juncos	1
Caguas	3	Hatillo	1
Utuado	3	Naguabo	1
Corozal	2	Mayaguez	1
Maunabo	1	Patillas	1
Salinas	1	Vega Baja	1
Yabucoa	1		

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