

**Felix M. Padilla. *Puerto Rican Chicago*. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987) 277 pp., \$11.95 paper.**

Felix M. Padilla's *Puerto Rican Chicago* is a noteworthy contribution to the ever burgeoning literature on the Puerto Rican community in the United States. While it is clearly a detailed sociological history of the Puerto Rican community in Chicago, it is also a study which positions this community in a broader network of racial, ethnic and class interactions. As more literature documents and analyzes the histories of diverse Puerto Rican settlements (from New York to Hawaii), scholars will begin to form a more complete picture of the impact of migration, race, labor and industry, and culture on the development of the various Puerto Rican communities in the United States.

The product of Padilla's work — a systematic study of the Puerto Rican community in Chicago — more than adequately fulfills his proposed intention to fill a void in the social-scientific literature. His method for collecting first-hand data from the respondents is essentially naturalistic in that he conducts unstructured interviews without the "constraint of specific questions." Insofar as possible, Padilla wanted to provide an unstructured and spontaneous environment by encouraging a "normal routine conversation as well as promoting[an]exchange of ideas with the respondent." These exchanges, through oral histories, were organized around experiences with major institutions: family, school, work, police, politics, etc. His direct data collection method is set against and amply supported by secondary sources which present critical information on the labor force, industrialization in Puerto Rico, wage and occupational distribution, educational information, settlement patterns, and so on. Throughout, Padilla seeks to draw comparisons between the experience of the Puerto Rican in Chicago and other racial/ethnic minorities (Mexican American, African Americans, and Native Americans) similarly positioned in the social class structure of American society. He demonstrates over and over again how "institutionalized or structural discrimination has contributed directly to the exploitation and subordination of the racial minority population." He doesn't see racism as a cause, but rather as a continued "justification for racial exploitation and domination." And, to give breadth and a broader social context to these observations, Padilla presents detailed comparisons with the work and settlement histories of previous waves of other immigrants (Eastern and Western European) who now occupy a different place in the Chicago class hierarchy. By drawing attention to these new ethnic-old immigrant comparisons, he effectively counters the usual "assimilationist" explanations for why Puerto Ricans and other racial/ethnic minorities seemingly fail to enter the social, cultural, and economic mainstream of American society.

In describing the evolution of the Puerto Rican neighborhood, Padilla suggests that the Chicago *barrio* is both a product of "racial dis-

crimination and ethnic solidarity.” The “Division Street Area,” he says, “is structurally the equivalent to the Puerto Rican nation;” once again, this is an echo of the internal colonialism theme, which he uses to partially explain the generational cycles of poverty and discrimination among Puerto Ricans and other racial/ethnic minorities in the United States.

Padilla gives the reader a multidimensional sense of the strength and persistence of the Puerto Rican by using poetry and the lyrics of “Salsa,” which speak of resistance to assimilation and a defense of the Latino way of life. The lyrics of Ray Barreto, Ruben Blades, El Gran Combo, and others are musical expressions of deeper cultural and political awakenings. The music, according to Padilla, “is further evidence that Puerto Ricans (and other Latinos) continue to reject the notion that they must subjugate their cultural tradition in order to rise within American society.”

Readers of this volume will not only be given the statistical tables, community demographic maps, migration history, and the history of the island of Puerto Rico and its people, but they will also be given the kind of analysis that makes a genuine effort to depart from a social science that frequently distorts and sometimes dehumanizes its subjects. Felix M. Padilla’s stated intention, from the outset, is to begin to shape a social science that seeks to counter some of the built-in biases found in some of the explanatory models most commonly used by mainstream social scientists. Noting the emerging Chicano and black sociology, Padilla joins others, such as Jose Hernandez Alvarez, in their search for models and methods that will effectively give investigators a more “comprehensive understanding of [the] sociohistorical reality of the Puerto Rican urban experience.” By combining a variety of theoretical models, each with some element of usefulness and applicability, Padilla and others believe that we will be able to move toward a unique, yet eclectic Puerto Rican social science perspective. The poetic verses, the “Salsa” lyrics, the hard statistical data, the eloquent oral histories, and the wonderful photographs all serve to give the reader a sense of the richness and complexity of the Puerto Rican community in Chicago.

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