

Chapter One

Looking for Work in the Global Economy: An Introduction

Sitting in the Norris Square Senior Citizen's Center in North Philadelphia, Doña Epifania reminisced about her decision to leave Coamo, Puerto Rico:

You didn't earn money. I am from a family of twelve children and my parents were poor, but we never lacked everyday things, because it was a parcel of 89 *cuerdas*, and with that we lived, from the crops and the animals. . . . We were poor but we had what we needed. [My father] worked with four daughters and just one son, and no one outside the family worked there. You harvested a lot and it lasted the year. The only thing we sold were the *gandules*.

Born in 1911, Doña Epifania came to the Philadelphia area in 1954 as a single mother, when someone she knew in Coamo told her about a job. "The man who brought me had worked in the Greenhouse. He went to Puerto Rico . . . and told me there were beans to cook. I came here and cooked for fourteen workers." Although it was men who were recruited for agricultural work, such as that at the Greenhouse, some women found jobs as well. Doña Epifania worked for wages and free housing. With her first paycheck, she sent for her eleven-year-old son, who had stayed with her parents. Telling her, "I'm going to help you with this boy," her boss gave him a job. Her son earned \$7.50 a week watering plants and then worked in the farm's market, giving half of what he made to his mother.¹

After two years at the Greenhouse, Doña Epifania moved to Philadelphia, lived with a friend, and found another job:

Another friend of mine told me, "Let's go to the factory, I'm going to take you and they are going to give you work right away." Right away they chose me, took me to the office, asked me my name and social security. They gave me the job even though I didn't know English, but I could learn it.

For seventeen years Doña Epifania worked, with many other Puerto Ricans, mostly women, as a sewing machine operator. She explained, "At first they gave me, I think, for

two or three weeks a small check for two hundred dollars. . . . You didn't know the laws well," but she considered it "a good union and a good job, the only thing was they moved to Florida." In the early 1970s her company relocated. Doña Epifania, however, had made Philadelphia her home; she had bought a house and married in 1960. While visiting a senior citizens center in Coamo, she was offered another job. "They offered me a job right away," she recounted. "I asked what they were going to give me and they told me the kitchen and I said, 'Oh my God, the worst, no I'm not going to work.'" With the closing of her garment factory, Doña Epifania had retired at the age of sixty-one.

Doña Epifania's narrative reveals important contours of Puerto Rican migration to Philadelphia. Like Doña Epifania, most migrants came to Philadelphia from rural areas. In the post-World War II era, Puerto Rico shifted from an agricultural economy with a predominantly rural population to an industrialized society with a largely urban population. According to economic historian James Dietz, Puerto Rico's "transformation from an agricultural economy was compressed into less than twenty-five years, from the late 1940s to 1970—one of the more rapid industrial revolutions." Economic change and government policies prompted massive emigration from Puerto Rico's rural areas to urban areas, both in Puerto Rico and in the States. Describing it as "one of the greatest population exoduses registered in contemporary history," demographer José Vázquez Calzada calculates that more than a million people left the rural areas of Puerto Rico between 1940 and 1970, with 700,000 moving to Puerto Rico's urban areas and 388,000 to the continental United States. As a result, the rural population decreased from 70 to 42 percent of the total in that thirty-year period.²

Coinciding with these dramatic shifts, the growth of Philadelphia's Puerto Rican population illustrates the causes of migration and of Puerto Ricans' increasingly dispersed settlement in the States. The postwar era was the peak period of Puerto Rican migration, as the population grew from fewer than 70,000 in 1940 to 1,391,463 in 1970. Although scholarly and public attention has focused on New York City, the history of Puerto Rican migration has been defined by dispersion. Whereas 88 percent of U.S. Puerto Ricans lived in New York City in 1940, only 58 percent made the city their home in 1970. This trend continued, and by 1990 only one-third of Puerto Ricans lived in New York City. As migrants settled beyond the barrios of New York, the Puerto Rican population in Philadelphia grew rapidly—from fewer than 2,000 to more than 14,000 during the 1950s. The city soon had the third largest Puerto Rican community in the country, behind New York and Chicago. By 1970, close to 27,000 Puerto Ricans lived in Philadelphia, and in 1990, with a Puerto Rican population of almost 68,000, Philadelphia remained the third largest Puerto Rican community in the States.³

This history of Puerto Rican migration to Philadelphia in the postwar era also helps to remedy the invisibility of Puerto Ricans in U.S. history. This is the first full-length historical work on the peak period of Puerto Rican migration since 1959, when Oscar Handlin's *The Newcomers* addressed Puerto Ricans and African Americans in New York City.⁴ U.S. immigration history, defined largely by the study of European immigrants at the turn of the century, has ignored Puerto Ricans, who are U.S. citizens and post-World War II migrants. Puerto Ricans have also been omitted from most U.S. labor, social, and

women's histories of the postwar era.⁵ Meanwhile, Puerto Rican Studies, which emerged as an interdisciplinary field in the 1970s, has been dominated by disciplines that focus on contemporary issues. While early works provided important overviews, detailed historical studies relying on historical methodologies have emerged slowly, and tend to focus on New York City between the World Wars. Although works on the Puerto Rican diaspora are increasing, Philadelphia has so far received very little attention.⁶

As a product primarily of the postwar migration, Philadelphia's Puerto Rican community illuminates the causes of migration, its regional and gendered dimensions, and the economic changes that affected Puerto Rican migrants in the States. While some rural households, like Doña Epifania's, relied primarily on subsistence economic activities, most also depended on commercial agriculture in the declining sugar, tobacco, and coffee industries. Confronting the rural economic crisis in their local communities, people migrated in search of work and came to Philadelphia through government-sponsored contract labor programs or *por su cuenta*, on their own. Philadelphia's economy sustained the migration by providing jobs. As Doña Epifania's work history suggests, men found agricultural work surrounding the city and women found work in the city's garment industry. Social networks increased the migration, as migrants helped each other to finance the airfare and to find housing and jobs. Doña Epifania got both of her jobs through friends, and after settling in the city she reciprocated. When she visited Puerto Rico, her nieces and nephews wanted to come to Philadelphia, so she paid their airfare:

They all came to my house and worked and gave me money. After work, I cooked for nine people. If I tell you the story, I'll never finish! They were all my nephews and nieces and on Fridays I collected money from each of them. Then they got married.

Once in Philadelphia, "They started working right away because my husband found them work." Yet, as migrants struggled to recreate their household economies, Philadelphia shifted from a manufacturing to a service economy. Puerto Ricans, who had made the city their home, became displaced labor migrants. Doña Epifania was not the only one to lose her job as factories relocated or closed.⁷

Redefining Labor Migration

In the post-World War II era, Puerto Rican men and women came to Philadelphia as labor migrants. Highlighting the interplay of structural factors and of human agency in shaping migration, my definition of labor migration bridges Puerto Rican Studies with immigration, labor, and women's history. First, Puerto Ricans became labor migrants because they were displaced from Puerto Rico's rural economies. Second, Puerto Ricans were recruited as a source of cheap labor through both formal, government-sponsored contract labor programs and less formal employer recruitment. Third, although recruited as laborers, Puerto Ricans were not always welcomed as community members. Finally, Puerto Rican migrants were individuals and household members seeking work and a better life. They were looking for work in a global economy.

Economic change in the postwar era displaced Puerto Rico's rural peoples. Agriculture, agricultural processing, and the home needlework industry declined, while the economic development strategy based on export-oriented industrialization failed to replace lost jobs. Employment decreased during the 1950s. The colonial relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico defined Puerto Rico's niche in the global economy, and made Puerto Ricans U.S. citizens. State policies in the United States and Puerto Rico affected economies and directly promoted migration, assuring that the economic and political causes of migration were thoroughly intertwined. The regional dimensions of economic change and government policies affected local communities, and it was from within their local communities and their households that people perceived and responded to changing conditions and developed strategies for economic survival. Migrating in search of work, with or without government-sponsored labor contracts, was one of those strategies. Residents of rural areas became part of Puerto Rico's massive internal migration and of the migration to the States.

Although labor migrants are still often portrayed as men, Puerto Rican women's narratives reveal the complexities of women's "work" and provide the basis for a redefinition of labor migration that includes women. Women as well as men were displaced by economic change, they were recruited as a source of cheap labor, and they migrated in search of work. Women like Doña Epifania considered themselves "workers." Reflecting on her life, Doña Epifania remarked, "I've spent my life working since I was six years old," and "I don't complain because I was a worker." She noted that in Coamo she contributed to her household's economy, and that among her brothers and sisters she was "the one that helped my father the most." She also considered her mother's domestic tasks as work: "My mother worked a lot in the kitchen." In addition to reproductive and subsistence work, she and her mother took in home sewing, getting materials on Mondays and delivering shirts on Fridays. Earning \$18 a week, she gave half of what she made to her mother and still saved \$80 before migrating. In Puerto Rico and in the States, her definition of "work" included her mother's reproductive work, subsistence labor on the family farm, home sewing, and paid employment outside the home.⁸

Arguing that women are labor migrants requires greater attention to gender divisions of labor in the countries of origin and destination, as well as a broader definition of "labor." Here I take "labor" to include reproductive and subsistence work, paid employment within and beyond the household, informal economic activities, and community work both paid and unpaid. This approach draws extensively on the scholarship on women and development, which examines women's productive labor, gender divisions of labor, and the impact of economic development policies. This literature has not, however, fully included reproductive labor, nor connected the impact of economic development with women's migration.⁹ While immigration historians have focused more on women's reproductive roles within their families and communities, scholars of Puerto Rican migration have treated women as labor migrants, emphasizing their paid employment, especially in New York's garment industry.¹⁰ Still, the intersections of productive and reproductive work require fuller exploration, supported here by my broad definitions of "labor" and the "household economy." I define the household

economy as what its self-defined members do in order for the household to survive and prosper. The household can be nuclear, extended, or alternative, and its economy can include reproductive and subsistence labor, paid employment, the financial contributions of migrant laborers, informal economic activities, and/or transfer payments, such as welfare, food stamps, or social security.¹¹

Puerto Rican women contributed to their household economies in a variety of ways both in Puerto Rico and in the States. In their oral history narratives Puerto Rican women emphasized the continuities in their contributions to their household economies even though the contexts changed considerably, from Puerto Rico's rural areas to an urban area in the States. While balancing productive and reproductive work was challenging and assumed different forms at various points in their lives, these women did not understand paid employment outside the home as a conflict in gender roles. By redefining labor migration and by connecting women's displacement from Puerto Rico's rural economies with their search for paid employment in the States, this book challenges the persisting notion that "work" is something migrating women discover in the host society. In addition, attention to women's labor migrations is pivotal in understanding the increased migration of the postwar era, migrants' destinations, their economic strategies, and their efforts to recreate their household economies. Likewise, economic changes affecting urban areas in the States displaced Puerto Rican women from the labor force. As Puerto Rican women became displaced labor migrants, the poverty of Puerto Rican communities in the inner cities increased.¹²

While Puerto Ricans came to Philadelphia *buscando mejor ambiente*, in search of a better life, they were recruited for jobs that traditionally relied on the cheap labor of immigrants or African Americans: farm and railroad work for men, domestic and garment work for women. The post-World War II era is often portrayed in immigration history as a hiatus between European immigrations at the turn of the century and renewed immigration after 1965. Despite Puerto Ricans' absence from U.S. historiography, this era is a hiatus only if migrants are separated from immigrants and if im/migration and labor history are treated as separate and unrelated endeavors. Instead, during the postwar era, U.S. labor needs were met by Puerto Ricans, southern African Americans, and Mexicans, as well as by increasing numbers of women. Like southern African Americans, Puerto Ricans have been recruited most heavily precisely when European immigration has been restricted, especially after the first and second World Wars. Labor migration, then, is not best understood only as the crossing of national boundaries. Puerto Rican migration demonstrates that labor migration includes internal and transnational elements and is best understood as a global process. In this sense, Puerto Rican migration has been a missing link in im/migration and labor history.¹³

Highlighting a central paradox of labor migration, Puerto Ricans arrived as unwanted community members, despite their recruitment as cheap labor. In his assessment of U.S. immigration policies, Aristide Zolberg contends, "The very characteristics that made them desirable as *workers* made them undesirable as *members* of the receiving society." As a result, U.S. immigration policy created a "back door" through which American employers imported successive groups of temporary workers," who were then "confined

to a prescribed economic role and excluded from membership in the national society.” Similarly, economist Michael Piore argues that migrant workers solved the problem of filling jobs at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy precisely “because they come from outside and remain apart from the social structure in which the jobs are located.” As long as workers were viewed as temporary, few problems arose; however, the transition to permanent settlement sparked “problems” and became “a focal point of clashes between native and foreign populations” that were “aggravated by latent racial and national prejudices.” The benefit to U.S. employers, who recruited low-wage laborers, stemmed from the fact that these workers were “marginal,” especially where “ethnic and racial traits provide a convenient criteria for limiting entry and justifying the distinctions among the work force that such limitations maintain.”¹⁴

Puerto Ricans’ U.S. citizenship meant that, unlike foreign workers, they could not be deported when their labor was no longer needed. During World War II, U.S. policy makers were reluctant to recruit Puerto Ricans precisely because their status as U.S. citizens meant that they could stay in the States. The limited recruitment of Puerto Ricans and more extensive recruitment of southern African Americans was accompanied by policy makers’ efforts to ensure that their migrations would be “seasonal” and therefore temporary. Of course, since Puerto Ricans and African Americans are U.S. citizens, policy makers had no enforcement authority. Mexicans, however, also recruited for agricultural work, were brutally deported when their labor was no longer needed, graphically depicting the tension between wanting laborers and not wanting community members. In helping growers secure a vulnerable group of foreign agricultural workers, historian Cindy Hahamovitch concludes, “the federal government intervened on behalf of growers, undermining farmworkers’ bargaining power and relieving growers of the need to recruit labor by improving wages and conditions.”¹⁵

As U.S. citizens, not undocumented workers or illegal aliens, Puerto Ricans were theoretically entitled to all the rights and privileges accorded other citizens. Yet they still had characteristics deemed undesirable by the receiving society. They were, after all, both a racially heterogeneous and racially mixed group, and a Spanish-speaking group with a distinctive culture. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights observed in 1976, “The United States has never before had a large migration of citizens from offshore, distinct in culture and language and also facing the problem of color prejudice.” In the postwar era, U.S. policy makers officially classified Puerto Ricans as mostly “white” and as “citizens,” while many people in the States defined Puerto Ricans as “colored” and as “foreigners.” Even arriving as U.S. citizens in a largely state-organized migration did not render Puerto Rican migrants acceptable in public sentiment. In Philadelphia new neighbors, social service workers, and policy makers reacted with alarm, and sometimes with open hostility, to Puerto Rican settlement in the city.¹⁶

At the same time, academic discourses characterized Puerto Ricans as having a “culture of poverty.” Rather than an accurate assessment of Puerto Ricans, the “culture of poverty” was a historically specific national discourse that evolved into a racial ideology. Anthropologist Oscar Lewis was not the sole architect of this racial ideology, but he articulated the concept clearly, applying it to Puerto Ricans. In a 1965 work, Lewis considered “poverty and its associated traits as a culture . . . with its own structure and

rationale, as a way of life which is passed down from generation to generation along family lines.” For Lewis this “relatively thin” culture was characterized by minimal integration into the larger society, minimal organization within the ethnic community, families that verbally emphasized unity but rarely achieved it, and individuals with a high tolerance for pathology. He also saw “fatalism and a low level of aspiration as one of the key traits for the subculture of poverty.” Lewis severed the “culture of poverty” from the conditions of poverty as the former became self-perpetuating and equated with the “national culture” of Puerto Rico. Migrating Puerto Ricans carried this culture of poverty with them, so that “many of the problems of Puerto Ricans in New York have their origin in the slums of Puerto Rico.”¹⁷

This ahistorical perspective is fundamentally at odds with an interpretation of Puerto Ricans as labor migrants responding to changes in a global economy. Instead of an economic displacement motivated by a search for work, Puerto Rican migration was attributed to personal problems, to “overpopulation,” and to a desire for welfare dependency. For example, Lewis wrote, “Although economic factors, such as low income and unemployment, created an atmosphere conducive to migration, we found that noneconomic factors were actually more important . . . the precipitating factor for leaving Puerto Rico was most often a personal social-psychological crisis.” Writing in the postwar era, C. Wright Mills, Clarence Senior, and Rose Kohn Goldsen emphasized overpopulation: “The population pressures upon the island are so acute and the need for adjustment so grave that these movements can be expected to continue.” Historian Oscar Handlin agreed: “Puerto Rico’s central problem since its annexation to the United States has been overpopulation.” Similarly, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan commented that “the economic pinch on the individual grew tighter because, just as his demands and desires were rising, his family was growing, too, and to sizes that were exceptional even for Puerto Rico.” They included welfare among the causes of migration: “One must not underestimate another set of material advantages: the schools, hospitals, and welfare services.” Once in New York City, welfare supplanted Puerto Ricans’ national culture: “The culture of welfare . . . is as relevant for the future of Puerto Ricans in the city as the culture of Puerto Rico.” As Puerto Ricans won the dubious distinction of being among the first to be cast as migrating in search of welfare benefits, the tension between wanting them as workers and rejecting them as community members dissipated—Puerto Ricans were portrayed as welfare dependent.¹⁸

Meanwhile, the new immigration history was reclaiming European immigrants’ culture. Challenging Oscar Handlin’s portrayal of “uprooted peasants,” the new immigration history argued that European immigrants’ culture was resilient and dynamic and mediated their confrontation with their new environment. The resultant scholarship was rich with attention to cultural adaptations and immigrant agency, with nuanced community studies, and with explorations of the connections between home towns and new areas of settlement. Yet even as they stressed immigrants’ agency, scholars devoted little attention to economic exploitation, nativism, or the anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism that confronted the immigrants. Since John Higham’s *Strangers in the Land* first appeared in 1955, immigration and nativism have remained separate areas of study. Although southern and eastern European immigrants were unwelcome in their own time, in retrospect they have appeared as an “immigrant success story,” largely as a result of this emphasis on agency,

cultural resiliency, and ethnic communities, and of an expanding economy that enabled upward mobility. Even as they have sought to connect immigrant agency with the global economy, immigration historians often portray the global economy as a neutral and inevitable process with little attention to the unequal relations between countries. Continuing an earlier emphasis on southern and eastern European immigrants, immigration historians addressed neither Puerto Ricans nor the post-World War II era, instead citing uncritically and often works written during the peak period of Puerto Rican migration that were imbued with the “culture of poverty.”¹⁹

Puerto Rican Studies, on the other hand, challenged the “culture of poverty” thesis by providing structural analyses of the causes of migration and poverty in the States. In contrast to immigration history, Puerto Rican Studies scholars focused on colonialism and economic exploitation, linking colonialism and global capitalism to explain the displacement of Puerto Ricans. In their assessments of the economic conditions of Puerto Ricans in the States, they turned to dual labor market theories or internal colonialism. This was not the immigrant success story. Nor was it the culture of poverty, since scholars treated Puerto Ricans as labor migrants. While this scholarship proliferates, providing an alternative to the culture of poverty perspectives in the dominant scholarly and public discourses, few of the works have used historical methodologies. This lack of historical work has mitigated against fully linking structure to human agency, or historical roots to contemporary issues.²⁰

My treatment of Puerto Ricans as labor migrants and of the “culture of poverty” as a historically specific racial ideology provides a fundamental critique of the “culture of poverty” perspectives still embedded in the mainstream literature on Puerto Ricans. In defining Puerto Ricans as labor migrants, I draw on Puerto Rican Studies’ attention to structural factors, to unequal relations between countries and within national borders, and to the gender dimensions of economic development, labor migration, and economic incorporation. At the same time, I provide a historical perspective, employing methodologies from immigration history that foreground migrants’ agency, community studies, and the connections between sending and receiving societies. As a result, my work provides the first micro-level analysis of Puerto Rican migration, detailing migrants’ origins and their destinations and including the ways gender has shaped migration and settlement patterns. I rely extensively on church records, archival materials that have been largely unused and are not yet inventoried, published and unpublished government documents, and oral histories. By bridging these fields, this full-length historical work on Puerto Rican migration in the postwar era seeks to link structure and agency, revealing the complexity of Puerto Rican migration and its human dimensions.

From the Global to the Local

Levels of analysis from the global to the local explain the causes of Puerto Rican migration and the contemporary poverty affecting Puerto Rican communities in the inner cities. Therefore, the causes of Puerto Rican migration emerged from the global econ-

omy, the colonial relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico, state policies, regional and local economies, social networks, and the decisions migrants made. Similarly, the causes of contemporary inner-city poverty are rooted in the postwar globalization of the economy, state policies, and the local economy. In the case of Puerto Rico, colonial ties set the unequal power dynamics of the global economy in sharp relief. Globalization in the postwar era brought U.S. corporations to Puerto Rico, dislocating the economy and the people. By the 1960s, the relocation of manufacturing industries from the inner cities of the States to other regions and overseas was displacing Puerto Ricans. The role of the state, in both Puerto Rico and the United States, is also crucial to understanding the causes of migration and of contemporary conditions in the inner cities. In addition to economic development programs, Puerto Rico's government directly promoted emigration. While the lack of immigration restrictions may seem to limit the role of the U.S. government, the United States was an active participant in the contract labor programs that brought migrants to the States. In addition, U.S. economic development and housing policies affected Puerto Ricans in the inner cities. Nor does the state constitute a solely structural component of migration and its consequences; ideological perspectives and assumptions shape policy makers' attitudes and the decisions they make. In other words, policy makers had human agency, too.²¹

Attention to the global economy, colonial ties, and the state, however, does not diminish the significance of the local, of social networks, and of human agency. Instead, I use local communities—San Lorenzo, Salinas, and Philadelphia—as loci for examining the impact of the global, the colonial, and the state on communities and on people's lives. Such an approach does not isolate these communities from larger trends and dynamics, but it does allow for local differences and varying responses. It was, after all, from within their local communities that Puerto Ricans perceived and responded to economic change and government policies. Their economic strategies were derived from their local communities and their households in Puerto Rico and in Philadelphia. Social networks of family and friends shaped migration and settlement, as Puerto Ricans helped each other finance migration or signed up for labor contracts together, and then helped each other find jobs and housing in Philadelphia. The question then is not whether formal contract labor programs or informal networks brought people to Philadelphia but rather how they interacted with each other and with changing economic conditions. Likewise, the concern is how the global economy and social networks were connected. Chapters 2 through 6 cover the period roughly between 1945 and 1970, addressing and connecting these various levels of analysis to provide a historical perspective on the causes and consequences of Puerto Rican migration to Philadelphia in the postwar era. The last chapter brings the discussion from the postwar era to 1990, and the Epilogue revisits the postwar era, as well as the comparative dimensions of the Puerto Rican experience.

The colonial relationship set the parameters for Puerto Rican migration to the continental United States. The United States acquired Puerto Rico in 1898 at the end of the Spanish-Cuban-American War and has retained sovereignty over the island ever since.

In 1917, the U.S. Congress passed the Jones Act, which made Puerto Ricans citizens of the United States. Both the legal and economic aspects of the colonial relationship were solidified in the post–World War II period. The U.S. military presence in Puerto Rico increased dramatically as the United States acquired more territory for bases, and as Puerto Ricans continued to serve in the armed services.

Economic policies fostered industrialization with U.S. capital and increased migration. Puerto Rico’s political ties to the United States were formalized as Puerto Rico became the *Estado Libre Asociado* or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in 1952. The U.S. Congress, concerned with the decolonization mandate of the United Nations Charter and with U.S. relations with Latin America, passed a bill specifying the process in 1950, and two years later Puerto Rico’s new constitution was accepted by a referendum in Puerto Rico and by the U.S. Congress. Although debated in Puerto Rico, the United States, and the United Nations, this political status has remained unchanged to this day. This colonial relationship increased Puerto Rican migration in the postwar era via its effects on Puerto Rico’s economy and its fostering of both contract labor programs and the unfettered functioning of informal networks.²²

The colonial relationship defined Puerto Rico’s insertion into the expanding global economy, and U.S. government policies and U.S. investors had a direct impact on Puerto Rico’s economy. In 1950, economist Harvey Perloff noted that “the most striking fact about the character of Puerto Rico’s external trade is its close tie to the United States.” Puerto Rico sent only 4 percent of its exports to other countries and received only 8 percent of its imports from outside the United States. U.S. tariff policy, as Perloff contended, “reflects changing economic and political situations on the mainland and requires adjustment of the Puerto Rican economy to mainland influences.” According to economist Richard Weisskoff, Puerto Rico’s economy is “subject to two sets of economic laws”—one set determined by U.S. policies and the U.S. labor market, and the other by “Puerto Rico’s own rules and logic.” The colonial relationship continued to affect Puerto Rico’s agricultural economies in the postwar era, and as Puerto Rico’s strategy for economic development shifted to industrialization the United States continued to play a defining role. For Weisskoff, Puerto Rico’s model for industrial development was “a return to the familiar colonial plantation model of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in which the foreigner owns and operates the factory while the local elite oversees the workers and overlooks the foreigner.” Puerto Rico became an investment site for U.S. capital and a market for U.S. goods.²³

The massive displacement of Puerto Rico’s rural peoples was shaped by a particular kind of economic development based on export-oriented, labor-intensive industrialization. Political economists Frank Bonilla and Ricardo Campos demonstrate that the “larger the increment of capital, the higher the rate of unemployment,” and that this unemployment and subsequent migration “are a result of swift industrialization, not a problem of backwardness.” The model of industrialization was based on private, foreign investment (in this case from the United States) and export-oriented, labor-intensive industries that relied on tax incentives and cheap labor, especially of women. Export-oriented industrialization creates few linkages in the economy and few addi-

tional jobs, as marketing and support services remain based in the investor's country of origin. Puerto Rico's industrialization program, known as Operation Bootstrap or *Operación Manos a la Obra*, failed to generate sufficient employment. As agriculture declined, total employment decreased during the 1950s, and between 1940 and 1970 labor force participation declined substantially. While many policy makers and scholars measure the success of industrialization by the Gross National Product, with employment levels a secondary concern, Dietz emphasizes the contradictions: "Just when the most rapid growth of GNP was occurring, unemployment levels were rising and a growing number of people were migrating to the mainland in search of work."²⁴

The architects of Puerto Rico's economic development were the politicians and policy makers of the Partido Popular Democrático (PPD). Under the leadership of Luis Muñoz Marín, the PPD dominated Puerto Rico's politics from their landslide victory in 1944 to the election of a pro-statehood governor in 1968. Founded in 1938, the PPD stepped into the political vacuum created during the Depression, when the traditional political dominance of U.S. sugar corporations and local sugar growers was undermined and a short-lived Nationalist and workers' alliance collapsed under political repression and internal ideological differences. Elements of their political program were outlined in the "Chardón Plan" for the restructuring of Puerto Rico's economy in light of the economic crisis in the sugar industry. The plan called for reduced sugar production, state-controlled sugar mills, more diversified agriculture, an industrialization program, and emigration. Although the Chardón Plan was not implemented, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established New Deal programs in Puerto Rico by executive order, and the resultant patronage was used to build a political machine that became the PPD. The party's rapid ascendancy was characterized by its close relationship with U.S. political leaders. Electoral victories in 1940 foreshadowed their landslide victory in the 1944 elections. The PPD worked closely with appointed Governor Rexford G. Tugwell, and when he resigned in 1946 the PPD was in a position to influence the appointment of the first Puerto Rican governor, Jesús T. Piñero. In 1947, the U.S. Congress passed the elective governor's law, and Luis Muñoz Marín became the first elected governor of Puerto Rico.²⁵

Given the colonial relationship, scholars debate the extent to which the PPD operated autonomously or as "mere puppets used by the metropolis at will." There is no question that the politicians and policy makers of the PPD developed strategies and made decisions within the confines of the colonial relationship. Political sociologist Emilio Pantojas-García contends that "development strategies within the colonial context represent particular modes of accumulation of imperialist capitalism that assume the subordination of wage labor to capital as well as the political subordination of the colony to the United States." Rather than threatening U.S. economic or political interests, the "development strategies in Puerto Rico are the ideological representation of the political project of a class coalition that represents the interests of metropolitan and local dominant sectors." At the same time, PPD and U.S. policy makers shared ideologies that shaped Puerto Rico's economic development strategy. As political economist Pedro Cabán notes, a "vision of state-society relations evolved gradually and reflected the thinking of the most powerful and politically sophisticated sectors in Puerto Rico and

Washington.” PPD leaders, many of whom had studied and worked in the States, were “influenced by their exposure to American liberal thought” and “technocratic ideology,” according to historian Michael Lapp, and their New Deal experiences in Puerto Rico merged “a liberal technocratic strain of American social science” with “populist politics in Puerto Rico.”²⁶

As a result, the colonial context forged an economic development strategy based on the decline of agriculture, increasing industrialization, and the reduction of Puerto Rico’s population through population control and emigration. Policy makers in Puerto Rico and the United States perceived Puerto Rico’s “problems” in similar ways and proposed similar solutions. They defined Puerto Rico’s continuing “problem” as “overpopulation,” industrialization as the only possible economic solution, and emigration and population control as crucial corollaries to economic development. Women were at the nexus of this strategy, as industrialization relied on the cheap labor of Puerto Rican women, and as population control promoted the sterilization and emigration of women. Through Puerto Rico’s industrialization, U.S. investors reaped tax-free profits. Industrialization did not, however, offset the loss of agricultural jobs or increase employment in Puerto Rico. In addition, the “solutions” crafted in the post–World War II period—tax exemptions, U.S. investment, migration, and the later food stamp program—were dependent on closer and more permanent ties between Puerto Rico and the United States.²⁷

Building on the scholarship in Puerto Rican Studies, which has emphasized the colonial relationship, industrialization, and island-wide trends, in Chapter 2 I explore the regional and gender dimensions of economic change, government policies, and migration, as well as how these dimensions shaped the towns of origin of Puerto Rican migrants in Philadelphia. Although the colonial relationship set the parameters for Puerto Rican migration, there were important regional and gender dimensions to economic change, government policies, and emigration that have not been fully explored in the existing literature.²⁸ In 1950, Puerto Rico was a largely agricultural society with three main commercial crops—sugar, tobacco, and coffee—that were grown in different geographical regions. While all regions were characterized by commercial agriculture combined with subsistence economic activities, the production of these crops created regional variations in landholding patterns, household structures, and the gender division of labor. Most manufacturing work was in agricultural processing and the home needlework industry. Agricultural decline affected Puerto Rico’s crops and regions differently, while the industrialization program concentrated new manufacturing jobs in the metropolitan area and employed mostly women. These regional and gender dimensions in turn fostered internal migration and migration to the States, creating a Puerto Rican community in Philadelphia that reflected the economic crisis in Puerto Rico’s rural areas.

In addition to economic development, the state shaped migration through government-sponsored contract labor programs. In Chapter 3 I examine the competing agendas of Puerto Rico’s policy makers, U.S. policy makers, and Puerto Rican migrants. For Puerto Rico’s policy makers, contract labor programs were a key component of efforts to reduce the population. Despite their initial reluctance to recruit Puerto Ricans

because of their status as U.S. citizens, U.S. policy makers turned to contract labor and Puerto Ricans to meet the needs of U.S. capital for cheap labor in the States in the post-war era. These were gender-based programs that recruited Puerto Ricans for areas of work that had traditionally relied on the labor of immigrants and African Americans. Puerto Rican women were contracted as domestics, and the men for seasonal food processing, seasonal agricultural work, and the railroads. While the government of Puerto Rico promoted permanent settlement in the States, U.S. policy makers remained ambivalent about accepting Puerto Ricans as permanent community members. Meanwhile, Puerto Rican migrants used labor contracts as their own economic strategy, some for seasonal income and others as a vehicle for permanent settlement. Contract labor programs contributed to the growth of the Puerto Rican community in Philadelphia and revealed the ways in which migrants' actions could complement or contradict policy makers' objectives.

In Chapter 4 I look more closely at the impact of economic changes and government policies in two *municipios* in different regions, San Lorenzo and Salinas, and at the choices migrants faced and the decisions they made to leave their local communities.²⁹ Both *municipios* sent a significant number of migrants to Philadelphia. San Lorenzo, a tobacco-producing *municipio*, and Salinas, a sugar-producing *municipio*, had different modes of production, gender divisions of labor, and household economies. Yet both had economies based on agriculture and agricultural processing, and both comprised households that combined work in commercial agriculture with subsistence activities. As both tobacco and sugar production declined, neither *municipio* benefited from Puerto Rico's industrialization program. Employment decreased and people migrated in search of work. Within these local contexts, Puerto Ricans developed economic strategies that included the difficult decision to leave their homes. Both *municipios* experienced significant emigration as residents joined the massive migration within Puerto Rico and to the States. Individuals left on their own or using labor contracts; significant numbers of men from both *municipios* signed on for farm labor contracts. Their destinations reflected the regional and gendered dimensions of economic change in Puerto Rico, the impact of the contract labor program, and economic opportunities in the States. Migrants from San Lorenzo and Salinas settled in Philadelphia and elsewhere, responding to the availability of unskilled jobs in the States.

Shaping contract labor programs, Puerto Ricans' status as U.S. citizens also enabled them to migrate to the States free from immigration restrictions. Extolling the virtues of combining industrialization with emigration, in a 1965 work economist Stanley Friedlander recognized the role of the colonial relationship: "The unique relationship was responsible for the absence of immigration barriers and allowed for the large-scale movement of the Puerto Rican population." U.S. citizenship facilitated migration and influenced migrants' destinations, as a 1947 study found that less than two percent of Puerto Ricans went to other countries. Migrants could respond to the availability of jobs in the States, and those who settled in the city could send for family and friends, without regard for the restrictive national origins provisions of U.S. immigration policy before 1965, or for the family reunification categories instituted in the 1965 Immigration Act.³⁰

The postwar reconversion left gaps in Philadelphia's labor market, and for a time Puerto Rican migrants found particular jobs readily available, which is the subject of Chapter 5. In addition to those who came to the area with labor contracts, other migrants came directly to the city without contracts. The jobs available to Puerto Rican men and women, however, were determined within a labor market divided along racial and gender lines. Puerto Ricans found work in the secondary labor market, in low-paying jobs that required few skills and offered poor working conditions, little job security, and few avenues for economic mobility. As they struggled to recreate their household economies, migrants became concentrated in specific sectors of the city's economy, with men in the service industries, especially restaurants and hotels, and women in the garment and food processing industries.

Despite labor recruitment and U.S. citizenship, Puerto Ricans were not always welcomed in the city as community members or neighbors. In Chapter 6 I explore the reception of Puerto Ricans in the City of Brotherly Love. Puerto Ricans arrived in the city during an era of racial change and tension, as southern African Americans came to the city and whites left for the suburbs, and as civil rights activism continued. As recent scholarship suggests, racial change and civil rights activism played out not just as national phenomena, but also as a series of intense local confrontations.³¹ Like African Americans, Puerto Ricans confronted the hostilities that accompanied racial change in the postwar era. In July 1953 street fighting broke out between whites and Puerto Ricans in one Philadelphia neighborhood. Social service workers and policy makers transformed this incident from a racially motivated attack against Puerto Ricans into an indication of Puerto Ricans' "problems of adjustment." In defining the "problem" as Puerto Ricans and their culture, social service workers and policy makers began formulating "the culture of poverty" ideology in Philadelphia. With its emphasis on culture, family, and generations, the "culture of poverty" implied that women, traditionally held responsible for these domains, were to blame for many of the "problems" affecting their families and communities. Examination of how this ideology developed in a local context provides new insights, allowing a concrete exploration of how the "culture of poverty" dismissed racism and racial discrimination and rendered invisible labor recruitment, state policies, and economic displacement, as well as migrants' struggles to recreate their household economies and their communities.

Chapter 7 brings these discussions from the postwar era to the early 1990s, by examining Puerto Ricans' efforts to recreate their communities, the impact of economic restructuring and residential segregation, and "underclass" interpretations of Puerto Rican poverty. In addition to the attitudes of neighbors, policy makers, and social service workers, Puerto Ricans confronted the city's shift to a postindustrial economy. Although they came as labor migrants when low-wage, unskilled jobs were available, economic restructuring meant the relocation of industry, the loss of jobs within the city limits, and the growth of a service economy. Within this changing context, Puerto Ricans strove to recreate their communities, challenging existing social service agencies, developing their own agencies and organizations, and entering city politics. Economic shifts, combined with residential segregation and government policies, nevertheless cre-

ated conditions of concentrated poverty for many of the Puerto Ricans who had made the city their home. Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia became displaced labor migrants.

By the 1990s economic conditions, government policies, and racial ideologies had transformed Puerto Rican labor migrants into the “underclass.” A national discourse emerged defining Puerto Ricans as the “other underclass.” For proponents of the “underclass,” as historian Michael Katz notes, “a new social stratum, identified by a set of interlocking behaviors, not primarily by poverty, dominated the wastelands that were all that remained of America’s urban-industrial heartland.”³² For Puerto Ricans, the “underclass” was a continuation of earlier “culture of poverty” interpretations that pointed to particular groups of people, emphasized their “pathological” behaviors, and blamed them for their poverty. In this interpretation, the obstacles that confronted Puerto Ricans stemmed not from a new urban environment, a tight job market, or racism and discrimination, but from their own cultural deficiencies. The “culture of poverty” and “underclass” paradigms ignore labor recruitment, the impact of structural changes, and migrants’ motivations in seeking work and a better life. As economic conditions changed, racist ideologies proved resilient.

While sharing much with other postwar im/migrations, Puerto Rican migration also highlights important dimensions of the post-1965 immigrations. Like African Americans and Mexicans, Puerto Ricans were recruited for low-wage jobs and confronted the racial ideologies and discrimination that characterized the postwar era, as well as the subsequent economic restructuring that affected many of the cities where these im/migrants had settled. At the same time, the colonial relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico illustrates dramatically the impact of U.S. political and economic interventions in shaping immigrations. The post-1965 immigrants have come overwhelmingly from countries in the Caribbean, Latin America, and Asia, where the U.S. presence has been felt via military intervention, political ties, and economic investment, especially the proliferation of export processing zones. Coming in search of a better life, many of these immigrants then face the changed urban environments inhabited by the Puerto Ricans, African Americans, and Mexicans who came before. These issues are addressed in the Epilogue.